SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 382. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 25TH, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

10/6 HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES. 10/6

TO MEASURE. BY PARCEL POST.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 100.

10/6 **Thousands of Testimonials** testify to the **wonderful value** of our Half-Guinea Costumes. Perfect fit guaranteed. **MADE IN OUR WORLD-FAMED SPECIALITE SERGE.** 10/6

Our most successful Costume for indoor wear is design No. 100. This Costume appears to **stand alone in point of excellence** to such a great degree compared with other Costumes offered to the public at anything **approaching the same price,** not only as regards the material, the Celebrated **Specialite Serge,** but as regards the **make, style** and **general appearance** of the Costume, that we cannot but feel the greatest amount of pleasure as well as unbounded assurance, **in recommending these useful and ladylike Costumes to your notice.**

We can equally recommend our **NEW OPEN-FRONTED COSTUME, Design No. 110,** also made in the **Matchless Specialite Serge,** which is comprised of a stylish Jacket with fashionable and full size skirt. Patterns Post Free. Ladies are requested to kindly forward their **name and address** for patterns, which will be sent **free,** and not on approval, together with our **Sketch Book** containing **Illustrations** and **Sketches** of our various designs.

Allen Foster & Co.'s Half-Guinea Costumes are UTTERLY UNRIVALLED ALL THE WORLD OVER. Can be had in following shades: Black, Navy, Tabac, Brown, Cinnamon, Fawn, Grey, Electric Blue, Myrtle, Bronze-Green, Ruby, Cardinal, etc.

Design No. 110. **Seaside Costume.**

15/6 We also offer another Costume at Fifteen Shillings and Sixpence, made from our New and Fashionable **Frieze Cloth,** and can be had in any of the designs as advertised in the Specialite Serge. Patterns and Order Forms, post free. Each Costume securely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra. We can recommend our **Velveteen Cape,** handsomely trimmed, Lace, Gimp, and Ribbon, for **7/6**; also our Rich Silk Plush Cape, **15/6**. Carriage 9d. extra. 15/6

CAUTION. **We have no Branch Establishments or any connection whatsoever with any Provincial Firms. We are bona fide manufacturers, and all our Goods are guaranteed LONDON MADE.** BANKERS: London and County, Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO., 17, ROSCOE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Digitized by Google

THE JOHN NOBLE HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

Direct from the Largest Firm of Costume Manufacturers in the world, have secured beyond a doubt the **ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD.** Being Absolutely Without an Equal Anywhere for Stylish Appearance, Durability, and Actual Money Value. **10/6**

TWO GOLD MEDALS AWARDED. **These Costumes** have received the highest praise from the leading journals of the day, and are justly regarded by all purchasers as **Even Better than Advertised.**

Each Costume scientifically cut, tailor-made, and beautifully finished in an exceedingly smart mode, as illustration. The design consists of full wide Godet skirt with belt, also very neat bodice with full front and broad box-pleat down centre, trimmed bold silk cord and three large buttons. Collar and cuffs outlined silk cord; saddle and sleeves lined.

Price complete only **10/6**, safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

Sizes in stock fit figures measuring 34, 36, or 38 in. round bust under arms, skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front; larger or special sizes made to measure, 1/6 extra.

THE JOHN NOBLE

COSTUMES FOR YOUNG MISSES are made in the John Noble Cheviot Serge, and trimmed military braid as illustration. A large box-pleat down the centre of the lined bodice, and a fancy pocket at each side of the skirt, complete a charming design at these prices: FROM **8/6**

Lengths	35	38	42	46	50 inches.
Prices	**8/6**	**9/6**	**10/9**	**12/-**	**13/6** each.

Each costume safely packed and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra.

KNOCKABOUT FROCKS FOR GIRLS are also supplied in the **John Noble Cheviot Serge,** with saddle top, long full sleeves, and pocket, at following prices: FROM **1/6**

Lengths	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42	45 in.
Prices	**1/6**	**2/-**	**2/6**	**3/-**	**3/6**	**4/-**	**4/6**	**5/-**	**5/6** ea.

Postage 1½d. extra. Lengths stated above are from top of neckband to bottom of skirt in front.

COLOURS: Any of the above garments can be supplied in **Black, Navy, Brown, Myrtle, Bronze Green, Electric Blue, Ruby, Dark Cinnamon, Fawn, or Grey.**

The JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE in which the above garments are made is a fabric of world-wide fame and durability, measuring 52in. wide. The full Dress Length of Six Yards can be supplied for 7/6, or any length at 1/3 the yard. Colours as above. **7/6**

PATTERNS, also **FASHION SHEETS** of numerous other designs in Ladies' and children's Costumes, etc., sent Post Free to any reader of *"Short Stories"* on application to

JOHN NOBLE Ltd., Brook St. Mills, **MANCHESTER.**

MRS. LAWRENCE

A Farmer's Wife, writes from Mid-Rasen, Lincolnshire: "For a long time I suffered severely from

INDIGESTION

And Wind in the Stomach, and had to call in the doctor. Having prescribed for me some time he said, 'I can do nothing more for you.' My husband urged me to try your WIND PILLS; he brought me a box and I took them. In a few days I was quite well and able to get up, and now enjoy excellent health. Publish my name and address."

Page Woodcock's Wind Pills

Being purely Vegetable, Tasteless, Mild, and Tonic, may be taken with perfect safety by the most delicate of either sex.

ALL SUFFERERS from INDIGESTION, LIVER COMPLAINTS, WIND ON THE STOMACH, BILIOUSNESS, SICK HEADACHE, PALPITATION OF THE HEART, etc.,

should avail themselves of this most excellent medicine.

Of all Chemists, at **1s. 1½d.** and **2s. 9d.** Post Free for Price from PAGE WOODCOCK, Lincoln.

TRILENE REGT TABLETS THE ONLY CURE for STOUTNESS Registered by GOVERNMENT Price 2/6

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: *"Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."* Send **2/6** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, **Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

TOOTH-ACHE

CURED INSTANTLY BY

BUNTER'S Prevents Decay. Saves Extraction. Sleepless Nights Prevented. Neuralgic Headache and all Nerve Pains Removed by BUNTER'S NERVINE. All Chemists, 1s. 1½d. **NERVINE**

TO TOBACCONISTS COMMENCING.

£20 See Illus. Guide and Catalogue (350 pages), 3d. "How to Open a Cigar Stores, from £20 to £2,000." Tobacconists' Outfitting Co., 183, Euston Road, London. (Over 50 years' reputation.) Manager, H. Myers.

S.S. S.S.

PEARSON'S

£100

COUPON.

No. 17

April 25, 1896.

S.S. S.S.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A doctor's widow knows of a simple, inexpensive remedy that permanently destroys the roots, and will forward particulars free to all those afflicted sending stamped envelope. Address Mrs. B. D. WOOD, 4, Duke Street, Villiers Street, London, W.

ARE YOU LITTLE?

If so, wear the *"A D"* Invisible Elevators (Regd.). Will increase your height up to four inches; the only approved means; detection impossible; simple, inexpensive. Send stamped envelope for particulars to the Oriental Toilet Co. (B 5 Dept.), 87, Strand, London.

DOUGLAS, HUNGERFORD, AND WILLIAMS.

Profits Paid during 1895.

Jan. 2, £8 per cent., Feb. 1, £6, Mar. 1, £5, April 1, £8, May 1, £7, June 2, £10, July 1, £9, Aug. 1, £9, Sept. 2, £8, Oct. 1, £8, Nov. 1, £7, Dec. 2, £7.

Total for 12 months £92 per cent., an average of nearly £8 per cent. per month.

Profits Paid during 1896.

Jan. 2 ... £6 per cent.	Feb. 1 ... £7 per cent.
Mar. 2 ... £6 per cent.	April 1 ... £6 per cent.

OUR NEW ILLUSTRATED MANUAL mailed free upon request, showing how these profits may be made WITHOUT SPECULATION. Cheques for profits mailed promptly 1st of each month, and for withdrawals of capital on 2nd and 16th of each month. Trial investments of £5 and upwards may be made.

We have not a dissatisfied Client.

DOUGLAS, HUNGERFORD, & WILLIAMS, 5, Copthall Avenue, London, E.C., and 11, Place de la Bourse, Paris.

THIN BUSTS

Quickly transformed and a good figure permanently obtained by a perfectly harmless, simple, and inexpensive self-treatment. Success guaranteed. For particulars, free, send stamped envelope in confidence to "Madame B. J." Oriental Toilet Co., 87, Strand, London.

HAIR DESTROYED

permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment, total destruction guaranteed. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope. Prof. F. T. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

"JUNO" CYCLES

Are the Very Best.

JUNO Safeties. Roadsters, 28lb.; Racers, 22lb. **JUNO Lady's Safety a Specialite.**

Send at once for JUNO Catalogue, sent post free to any part of the world, interesting and valuable to all. METROPOLITAN MACHINISTS' CO., LTD., 75 and 76, Bishopsgate Without, London, E.C.

N.B.—Every JUNO Guaranteed. MENTION PAPER.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

BLUSHING

Permanently cured. A Pamphlet giving sound practical advice and particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home-cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. B. L. Holt, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

RED NOSES

Permanently cured in a few days by a simple, inexpensive self-treatment. Particulars free on receipt of stamped addressed envelope to Dr. A. M. Curtis, York Chambers, Adelphi, London, W.C.

AJAX CYCLES FOR LADIES & GENTLEMEN

ARE RICH VALUE. 25 to 30 per cent. saved and carriage paid.

IMMENSE STOCK, NEW AND SECOND HAND.

Easy Terms from 10s. per Month. Lists free.

Now Open.—LARGE CYCLING SCHOOLS, at 42, High Street, Camden Town, London, and at Liverpool.

BRITISH CYCLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 42, High Street, Camden Town, London, N.W., and 45, Everton Road, Liverpool.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY

C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 382.] For the Week ending April 25th, 1896. [ONE PENNY.

The Suicide of Julian Sorel.

From the Italian of Matilde Serao.

He went slowly up the Via Nazionale, moving with difficult steps, and upon his handsome, pale face, worn and altered, was the look of mortal lassitude. He went with downcast eyes, and hands hanging loose at his sides, jostled, pushed by people in haste, and he seemed to see nothing, to feel nothing, only every now and then there sounded in passing the whistle of the train which goes from the Piazza Venezia to Termini, and Julian Sorel started at the sharp note, stopped and looked with his wan and sadly-wearied eyes at the car, jolting upon the rails with a dull crash.

Then Julian Sorel resumed his way, always more slowly, stopping to look at the shop windows, of which the gloss was dimmed by the heavy dampness of that morning in March; but his eyes had the vacancy, the cold stupefaction, of those of a man who does not see. Yet he remained several minutes before a display of toys, looking at a row of dolls, with hair blonde as tow, eyes bluer than any blue sky, cheeks pinker than any rose; dolls in lace-trimmed nightdresses, or sumptuously clad in satin and velvet; dolls wrapped in furs like Russian great ladies; dolls with their outfit and furniture.

A cloud of tears rose to veil the dry eyes of Julian Sorel, before all that blonde beauty richly clothed, before those rosy creatures loaded with adornments of luxury, and he was obliged to lean against the window-frame of the shop, in order not to fall. Then he walked on more depressed than before. But although his step was that of a man who has not strength to reach his aim, or fears to reach it, he arrived at the corner of Via Torino, where he was to turn. He stopped, remained motionless, as if incapable of arriving at the grey villa, which was already seen amid the slender group of green trees that surrounded it. Now an expression of fear was added upon his face to the profound weariness evident there; the pretty villa arising amid the boughs frightened him.

He was a prey to a thousand hesitations as he traversed the short space of the street; his hand, pressing the white button of the electric bell, trembled.

A serving-man, still in his morning jacket, and with a blue cotton apron before him, came to open the door.

"Is the signora still asleep?" asked Julian Sorel, with a weak, broken voice, sadly hoping for an affirmative reply.

"No, Eccellenza; she called her maid an hour ago."

The servant had given him, it is true, the title of Eccellenza, but he had looked with such easy coolness, had preceded him with such indifference, without even looking to see if Julian Sorel followed him, that the latter quivered with pain, perceiving at once, with his morbid sensitiveness, the shade of contempt in the servant. Julian Sorel has traversed a large ante-room and two parlours, furnished with the most expensive luxury, in the most correct and artistic taste, and had stopped in the hall, a room like a conservatory, all covered by glass and veiled by thin, but impenetrable, curtains of Oriental gauze, full of the rarest plants and the richest and most fantastic furniture, soft skins spread upon the floor, and exotic flowers rising from vases of choice porcelain, of delf or china.

The air was warm, and a strange, inebriating perfume was in the atmosphere. Seated in a bamboo armchair, with elbows resting on his knees and his head leaning on his hands, he abandoned himself, so to say, to utter depression, without raising his head, without even hearing the light step of Gwendoline Harris; and the blonde, slender woman stood before him, looked at him

All rights reserved.]

Digitized by Google

with her cold and brilliant blue eyes—bluer than the skies—passing her pink, taper fingers over the fluttering white feathers with which was trimmed her gown of white wool, all embroidered with silver like a priestly stole.

"Then?" asked the fresh, clear-cut voice of the woman.

"Oh, Gwendoline!" he murmured, becoming paler still, unable to bear the gaze of those icy blue eyes.

She extended herself, all white, upon a white divan, covered with cushions of white silk so soft that she sank among them. There were to be seen the two little feet clad in slippers of white velvet, edged with feather trimming, and her thin stockings of black silk, lightly embroidered in silver. The mass of her blonde hair was held up by a large comb, all studded with small pearls, and two great white pearls hung from her ears. She played with the filaments of the feather trimming of her gown softly, as a bird that smoothes its plumage. The pink of her skin was truly pinker than any rose.

"Then?" she asked again of Julian Sorel.

He dared not reply, and looked at her with eyes of intreaty. Gwendoline shook her blonde head slightly, and began to play with her gleaming rings, that covered every finger up to the first joint, like an Egyptian idol.

"Then the affair has gone wrong?" Gwendoline then asked with her pure crystalline voice.

"Wrong," he answered feebly.

"For ever?"

"For ever," he repeated, like a fatal echo.

No impression of wonder, of sadness, of pity came to trouble that pink face of the woman, that clear-cut and calm forehead, those eyes like a frosty heaven.

"You are a dead man," she declared coldly.

"Yes, indeed," said Julian Sorel, ashen of face as a corpse.

"What are you come to do here? This is not a cemetery, and none of my antique caskets can serve you as a coffin," said Gwendoline without anger, breathing upon one of her opal rings to make it shine.

"I came to salute you for the last time."

"And yesterday evening did I not say adieu to you? Did not you understand it?"

"I did not understand it, and I hoped, from the banker Colzada this morning——" he stammered humbly.

"A useless hope; no one gives money to the dead."

"You are right," he said in a low tone, with bent head.

She watched him strangely. It seemed as if she were measuring the moral depth of that depression, and wished to know of what that immense weakness would be capable. He was silent, lost, exhausted.

"To what figure do your debts amount?" she asked all at once in her clear, cold voice.

Julian Sorel lifted his head, and looked at Gwendoline as in a dream—as if he had not heard or understood.

"To what figure do your debts amount?" she repeated, dominating him with her blue eyes.

"I don't know . . . I don't know . . . do not talk to me about it," he begged her, shuddering, passing one hand across his brow.

"You owe two hundred and seventy thousand lire. I reckoned the sum."

It seemed as if the syllables of this hard phrase beat, every one, upon the brain of the unhappy man, for his face altered.

"And you have not a soldo to pay with; and you have no more resources; you have exhausted all of them; and you have no hope of inheritance, for all your relatives are dead; no hope in your work, because you do not know how to work; you have been a man given to love and to pleasure; no hope of business, of speculation, because within a month, a week, you will be a bankrupt, a defaulter."

"Gwendoline, if you love me, be silent, be silent."

"I do not love you," she said quietly.

"If you ever cared for me be silent, do not kill me."

"I never cared for you," she persisted, proudly contracting her beautiful lips, red and fresh.

Julian Sorel looked at her with such new despair in his eyes that the haughty woman smiled with pride.

"Sometimes—you have told me that you cared for me," he stammered.

"I told a falsehood, naturally," she explained, "and you know that very well. It pleased you to have me tell falsehoods, that is all."

"Yes, it is true, your falsehood was my happiness."

"And so," she concluded, "you have spent all that you possessed, and you have made two hundred and seventy thousand lire of debts to pay for that falsehood. For that falsehood you go to your death."

"To my death," he repeated, opening his arms, with the gesture of final despair.

"It was a sweet and beautiful falsehood, let us say so," resumed Gwendoline, crossing her pretty feet, finely shod with dainty black and white, "and 'tis worth the trouble of dying for. Do not hope that your creditors will give you truce! You owe between fifty and sixty thousand lire to Giacomo Levi, to Francesco Sangiorgio, to Giovanni Lamarca, your friends, whom you have made your enemies for ever, and who persecute you worse than the money-lenders, Pietro Toscano and Angelo Cabib, to whom you owe less, much less, but the interest has mounted up so high! You are in debt, too, to the Parisian milliners, Worth, Morin, and Redfern, all for dresses, for me, and they have given you credit because you had spent with them the half of your fortune; you owe the Italian dressmakers, Bellom, Pontecorro, the Boria sisters, Tua; you owe all the jewellers, Marchesni here, and Franconeri at Naples; you owe all the dealers in furniture and elegant *bric-à-brac*, Janetti, Cajiata, Maria Beretta, also Guglianetti, of Milan; all these have given you credit, because you have bought so much of them before. But they want their money, and they are right; why should they lose it? They are worthy people."

"Gwendoline, Gwendoline, do not be pitiless; be silent, be silent, I am dying," he cried, with his eyes wild with acute pain.

"Do you know what is the balance of accounts for the beautiful sweet falsehood?" she continued, as if she had not heard him. "A million and eight hundred thousand lire. You, I imagine, have not even the money to buy a revolver."

"I have not," he moaned, from his abyss of sorrow.

"One million eight hundred thousand lire, and to be obliged to resort to an economical suicide, a poor little suicide—that of the beggars and the forsaken servant maids—in the river, the Tiber!" she murmured with a vague smile, as if she were speaking to herself.

He raised towards her his painfully stupified gaze. And Gwendoline understood the meaning of that amazement.

"You are now telling yourself that I am a monster of cruelty."

Digitized by Google

"I am not saying anything," stammered the weak creature.

"You say it. And you are wrong. Let us balance our accounts, for we are never to see each other again. You, what did you want of me?"

"That you should love me—that I might be your lover, your servant, your friend."

"And I, what have I asked of you?"

"Nothing."

"And you have given me everything in order to be loved or that I should feign to love you. That is the balance of accounts. Now I, to show you that I am not cruel, can only give you one piece of wise advice—kill yourself. You had a fortune, you have it no longer; you had a woman, you have her no longer; you had honour, it is shipwrecked; you have a fine and delicate soul, a sensitive mental heart, and you have, together with all that, a need to enjoy, to be happy, which is your greatest need; you cannot, then, combat against poverty, abandonment, and dishonour. Kill yourself! kill yourself. You cannot save yourself otherwise. For what should you live? He who kills himself pays his debts; he who kills himself has no more need of honour, nor love, nor money; he who kills himself conquers supreme peace. You have nothing more to do in the world; go out of it, into the common grave, where there are no creditors, and where there will not appear any more the divine and cursed blue eyes that were the cause of your death."

They flashed, those blue eyes, with these last words. Julian Sorel looked at them and drank from them deadly poison. Julian Sorel heard the clear and fatal voice, and felt in his heart its mortal and lugubrious vibrations.

"It is two months since I decided to kill myself when there should no longer be any remedy," he said faintly.

"You have waited too long; go, go and throw yourself into the Tiber," she said, looking at him, hypnotising him, giving him the suggestion of love, grief, terror.

"I am going," said Julian Sorel, and he rose.

But he did not take a step. She still looked at him, in order to conquer him entirely in his infinite weakness.

"Go, go; you will be happier dead," Gwendoline told him again.

"Give me a kiss," he asked humbly, kneeling before the divan where she lay, not to give her the annoyance of rising.

She turned slightly towards the kneeling man, took his head between her slender, jewelled hands, and placed her beautiful fresh lips upon his forehead. And it seemed that again, in that long kiss, the lips of Gwendoline said to him:

"Go, go, you will be happier dead."

* * * * *

Going down the Via Nazionale, Julian Sorel went to death. He no longer dragged his limbs wearily, but neither did he hasten; he did not stop before certain shop-windows, but the eyes that he fixed upon the passers had the same painful expression of sightlessness; he did not start now when the whistle of the train sounded, but the pallor of his face had become livid.

The dying man had received the final wound; but a way had been pointed out to him and he was going there, without haste, but fatally, by the blue, icy light of two divine eyes which led him, to the funereal sound of a crystalline voice of a woman which accompanied him, with the caress of two slender hands upon his brow and hair with the last kiss of the speaking lips, the last kiss and the last words pervading his brain, his soul, his heart, all his being.

Now, as he walked, Julian Sorel thought only to what point of the great Tiber he should go to throw himself in. Gwendoline Harris had not told him that. Not at Pipetta, for the bridge is too much frequented by day, and there are the landings for the shell row-boats, and a suicide is always a failure there; not at the Albero Bello, because there are too many vessels loaded with Sicilian wine; where, then?

He remembered an evening in August, in which, passing through Rome with Gwendoline Harris, on the way from Vienna to Sorrento, they had gone to Ponte Molle, like citizens, like all who are obliged to remain in Rome for the summer; and they had walked up and down along the river, towards the vast meadows of Tor di Quinto, towards the shady Via Angelica; Gwendoline was dressed in soft, white silk, as always, all in white, and had had a large, light mantle of white wool; yes, yes, he would die at Ponte Molle, towards Tor di Quinto, or by the shore of Via Angelica; it was still she who suggested to him this idea. He was at Piazza Venezia when he decided.

He took his way by the Corso to the right. Some one saluted him; he did not recognise who it might be, and passed on. Several stopped him, they were creditors for small or great sums, and the demand varied, now brutal, now whining, but insistent, implacable. They had known him to be rich and had given him credit, and they believed that he still had money, believed that he denied them from unwillingness. All the passage by the Corso was one long torture for him, an unmerited, unjust torture, since, indeed, he was going to die at this place, amid a concert of voices, of words, of phrases that all told him seeking his money: "Go, go, throw yourself into the river; you will be happier dead."

So when he had nearly reached the Piazza del Popolo there was hardly anyone about; and that increasing solitude calmed him a little, as he took the muddy walk that leads by the Via Flaminia, along the Parioli hills, to Ponte Molle.

No one in the little café where the cab-drivers and carters stop; no one in the little taverns that sprout up every few steps, until the middle of the Via Flaminia; no one in the lonely fields, all a desert of mud, where hardly grew some blackish, stunted trees. He thought whether he ought to write something before dying, an explanation, a salute; and a new wave of despair suffocated him; he had no one, no one to whom to write, not a relative, or a friend, or an acquaintance; no one would mourn or curse him except his creditors; he had lived for enjoyment, only for sake of love, luxury, pleasure; and so he died for these things, bearing in his soul as a last farewell the words of Gwendoline Harris, for whom he had spent a million and eight hundred thousand lire, the words with which she had told him to kill himself, because he would be happier dead. No one, no one, not his mother, not a sister, a betrothed, a friend, nothing, nothing—not a human tear for him; and the final scene of his life, in that great solitude and silence of the Roman Campagna, on that forlorn March day, walking and sinking in the mud, was the worthy completion of his existence.

All at once he felt a push against his leg. He turned. A dog was following him, and he turned to look at it. It was a very ugly, very dirty, lean dog, that appeared as if he had upon him ten days of vagabondage and hunger amid the mud of the Campagna; a disgusting dog. Where had he come from? Julian Sorel could

Digitized by Google

not have told. There were no more houses on the Via Flaminia; perhaps he had run out, unnoticed, from the lane of the Arco Scuro. He had been following, perhaps, for some time; and he looked at Julian Sorel with his kind and gentle dog's eyes.

"Go away," said the man rudely.

The dog stopped a moment, then began again to follow.

"Go away," and he gave it a kick.

The poor dog took the kick in one shoulder and howled sadly; but still looking at Julian Sorel, it still followed him. He stopped, greatly disturbed. Why did that dog follow him so obstinately even after being beaten? Why did it look at him with those eyes that seemed human, so expressive were they of pity and sorrow?

"It must be a lost, hungry dog looking for a master," he thought, as he stood contemplating that singular beast.

The dog, too, had stopped, and held its scrubby head down, patiently waiting.

"Go away, go away," Julian Sorel said to it, "I must die."

The beast raised its head and looked, with those eyes of a loving, poor, sorrowful animal. All the soul of Julian Sorel shook with fear and wonder. But *who, who* was looking at him in that tender animal gaze. What new madness of pity came to give him a final grief, a grief made of humble tenderness of a most bitter and sweet melting mood?

"I must die, I must die," he said, speaking to that beast as if to a man; "I shall be happier dead."

And he went on again, towards Ponte Molle, repressing all the tears of an unknown sadness which rose to his eyes, repressing the sharpness of a mysterious regret. The dog followed him step by step; Julian Sorel heard it behind him, walking faithfully, disgustingly ugly and dirty, half dead with hunger and fatigue, but decided to follow him, wherever the man on the way to death might wish to go. A prey to an unconquerable disturbance between an odd new despair and an odd breaking up of his entire will, Julian Sorel shuddered, hearing the animal's step, vigilant, almost inflexible in its affectionate persecution.

He would have liked to stop, strike it, throw stones at it, kill it with kicks, but the idea of encountering those tender canine eyes, so filled with human pity, frightened him. Ah, surely, surely, *someone* was looking at him through those eyes. He dared not look at them, those eyes of an animal almost as if they spoke to him of the human goodness that he had disdained, of all the human sufferings that he had despised, of all the human tears that had flowed for him in vain; he dared not look at them, as if he found in them the unknown reproof, mystic and austere, which Life makes to him who has not known how to understand her and therefore has not known how to deserve her. *Who* was looking at him, through those eyes so deep with compassion; *who* was still weeping over him, over the existence of a pleasure-loving and capricious brute that he had ever lived; *who* was weeping over that noble soul dragged in the shame of an impure love?

Ah! that beast would not go away; it followed him, it followed him until his final step, no human force could liberate him from that company.

"Let him come, then, to see me die," he thought. But at Ponte Molle they met three carts full of pozzolana that came slowly towards Rome to the melancholy whistle of the rough drivers; and towards Tor di Quinto it seemed to Julian Sorel that the land was too wide, too open, to kill himself there in the river. Better the wide and winding road of the Porta Angelica which runs under large trees, beside the great yellow river full of whirlpools and the Farnesina meadows. He would go down to the water's edge, and silently, falling rather than throwing himself in, without any noise, would die in the deep, fierce river. But the dog would perhaps throw itself into the water to save him; the dog did not wish him to die—this was the idea working in the disordered brain of Julian Sorel. And then, as if that unknown animal were a man, as if he could understand everything, Julian Sorel, in the muddy and deserted road, under the great, black, bare trees, before the wide, yellow river, cried to it desolately:

"I must die; I have two hundred and seventy thousand lire of debts and cannot pay; I must die, let me die."

The poor beast, dirty and hideous, looked at Julian Sorel with eyes full of pity, as if veiled by tears; not a voice nor a footstep throughout the wide plain, smoking with moisture from the soil of the fields; not a voice, not a boat upon the wide river with its destructive whirlpools; alone that man and that dog. That look! Did it not say, perhaps, to Julian Sorel, that humble look of an animal—that death does not save from dishonour, that it is more honest to live, working out the penalty of a great error, than to take refuge in the tomb? *Who, who* told him so, in those eyes, and in his conscience?

All his own people, who were dead at their appointed hour, quietly touched by destiny, but honoured, trusting to be mourned, told it to him, perhaps, in those eyes; all those who had loved him, and who were far away and could not save him now; all those whom he had loved in childhood, in youth, ten years, a day, an hour, they, perhaps, or their beloved shades, or their far-off tender voices, or their kind eyes thus would save him, or their caressing hands that would withhold him—they, in that look!

Conquered by an immense weakness, Julian Sorel let go himself upon the sandy bank of the river, hiding his face in the damp sand, with open arms, sobbing softly every now and then, but without tears. The dog had seated himself beside him, and laid its muddy nose upon its dirty, thin paws; and during all the while that Julian Sorel lay, stretched at full length in the fatality of life and death that fought for their prey, the poor beast did not move, keeping his eyes fixed upon the man in his agony. In agony, the weak creature who had always lived for the smile of the moment, without will, without faith, without goodness; in agony, the flaccid soul, the conquered soul, the soul impoverished by small ideas and by impure desires; in agony, the soul that had cast away the noble part of himself, that feared the penalty and would flee the chastisement—in agony!

The turbid waters of the murderous river ran, they that had borne to sea so many corpses; the funereal Roman Campagna was silent, motionless under the damp, malignant breath of March; the day was at its end. The dog softly, softly, lapped the open hand of Julian Sorel; that indistinct caress was like a breath, like a voice, like a word, was like the apparition of a phantom. The body of the man stretched out there gave a great start, and the heart truly broke in tenderness, in repentance, in pity, in the desire for human chastisement.

Then, in the frosty twilight, he returned towards Rome. Between Via Angelica and Via Triofale the dog disappeared in the shadow and Julian Sorel continued his way towards Rome—towards chastisement.

Digitized by Google

The Dissolution of The Templars' Clique.

"Why don't—you—fellows—get—married?"

These were the astounding words, jerked out between the puffs at a pipe, that awoke me suddenly from my pleasant dreamy reverie.

The words came in appropriately enough, for I was thinking of the sweet face of a girl, to whom I had been introduced a few days ago.

There were three of us smoking and talking round the fire in our rooms in the Temple—Danvers, Brown, and myself. We were known to our friends as the "Templars' Clique," this because of our persistent resistance to the fascinations of certain fair charmers.

No words to do with matrimony had been mentioned among us for years; each one prided himself on the fact that he was a confirmed woman-hater.

We were therefore surprised and incredulous at the astounding question Brown propounded. It was the prelude to the dissolution to the Templars' Clique.

It was some time before I could grasp his meaning. I sank back in my chair, and blinked feebly at Brown. He was calmly engaged in lighting his pipe.

Danvers sprang to his feet.

"What did you say then," he cried, "will you kindly repeat yourself?"

"Why don't"—puff—"you fellows"—puff—"get married?" said Brown. There could be no mistake about his words this time.

He feigned surprise at the look on our faces, threw away his match, and settled back in his chair with his hands behind his head, evidently preparing himself for a lengthy argument.

Danvers accepted the challenge.

"What do you mean by asking such a question as that?" he said.

"Are you mad, man, or don't you know what you are saying? Does it look as if we should get married?"

I sprang on a chair in my excitement.

"Look at this room," I cried, "what do you think it would be like if a girl was here? Do you think she would allow me to stand here if I was married, eh?"

"Look at me," shrieked Danvers (he was dancing madly about). "Do you think I could go about like this if I was married? What should I do if a girl was sitting here?"

Brown had been listening patiently to our excited words. I did not like the look on his face. It seemed as if he had heard our arguments before, and was prepared with an answer for them. He looked round the room, noting every detail.

"I see," he said, "a disgracefully untidy room, filled with tobacco smoke, and—altogether repulsive."

Altogether repulsive! Brown was indeed in a bad way.

He closed his eyes and leant back in his chair.

"Now I can see," he went on, "this same room transformed by the sweet presence of a woman. It is brightly furnished, filled with flowers, and abounding with knick-knacks and tables. Two chairs are drawn to the fire."

Brown gazed steadily at Danvers to answer his questions.

"I look at you," he said, "and see an excited little man, dressed in a barbarous fashion." Brown closed his eyes again.

"*Now*," he continued, "I see a respectable, smug looking fellow, occupying one of the two chairs drawn to the fire. By his side is seated—"

"Oh, stow it," interrupted Danvers, whose patience was fast coming to an end. Then after a thoughtful pause: "Well, yes, then. By his side is seated—a girl—already tired of married life; her husband enjoys little of her society, and begins to look fondly back on his bachelor days."

Danvers laughed merrily when he remembered that he was still free.

Deep down in his heart, however, he knew he was belying the sex. A sweet name kept ringing in his ears—May Lancaster—a sweet form kept floating before his eyes, and was enframed in the tobacco rings he was blowing. It was wearing a bright blue dress to match the laughing eyes; freckles covered the childlike forehead, and two laughing dimples were on its cheeks.

I took up the train of Danvers' thoughts.

"By his side was seated a girl—whose sole object in marrying seemed to be to deprive her husband of freedom. She rules him with a firm hand, which is perhaps accounted for by the fact that she was once captain of her football team, and had ambitions of taking a degree at Oxford."

Yet all through the day I had been haunted by a face to whom I knew these words would never apply. May Lancaster! What a pretty name it was!

Suddenly an idea struck me. I sprang forward and looked Brown steadily in the eyes. I beckoned to Dangers to come and look.

"You are in love, man," we cried suddenly, "we see it in your eyes, it is written clearly on every feature. Traitor!"

Brown put his hands in his pocket and slowly drew out a photograph. He held it up to our faces.

At the sight of it Danvers sank back in his chair; and covered his face with a cushion. I reeled on to a sofa.

It was the picture of a smiling girl with light coloured eyes, who had freckles on her forehead, and on whose cheeks two charming dimples were to be seen.

Two words were scrawled across the photograph in bold character: "May Lancaster."

"She's going to marry me," Brown explained.

The Templars' Clique was dissolved.

M. Woodward.

Digitized by Google

The doctor's wife scanned her visitor in silence. With the audacity of an out-and-out Protestant she was revolving in her mind certain impious questions. This was the third mendicant in pious garb who had come to her door within a month soliciting alms for the support of some far-away religious institution. Who was to assure her that the contributions she had already made would be faithfully dedicated to the purpose for which they had been given? Would the Catholics take pity upon the needy or suffering of other denominations? In her growing distrust she leapt to reckless surmises. What if these black-robed women were not "sisters" after all, but merely bold imposters, who assumed the dress of the order for the time for their own selfish aims and purposes?

She recalled herself from her reverie with a little shudder, and her voice was hard and cold as she spoke.

"Sister Veronica, I really do not feel justified in helping your hospitals and asylums any more. I think it is time we were looking up the poor about us. There may be fellow-beings suffering in our midst without a murmur, people whose pride forbids them to appeal to public charity. I think we should be doing more nobly if we devoted our time to looking up such cases, instead of contributing to the support of distant institutions, of which we know nothing."

"Oh, madam, if others were only of your thinking!" interrupted the visitor impetuously.

"What then? I fear you would not succeed so well in your missions"

Mrs. Belden leant forward as she spoke, and gazed curiously upward into the countenance beneath the peaked white bonnet. The momentary flutter, and the crimson wave which had transformed her caller's face, passed away, leaving it cold and still in its purity.

"One must rejoice at any lessening of the great sum of human misery," was the quiet response.

The anchorite turned to go. She had not only failed in her errand, but had met with a decided rebuff; yet at the door she paused a moment, and held out a shapely white hand, which met the other's in a sympathetic grasp.

The doctor's wife stood at the window, with mingled curiosity and interest, and watched her visitor depart. To her surprise the latter did not continue up the street, but retraced her steps along the lonely path leading in the direction of the railway station.

The picture of the strange woman lingered obstinately in Mrs. Belden's memory. There was something oddly familiar about her face. The very dimples in her cheeks—that a sister of charity should have dimples—the gentle curves of chin and mouth, and the bright flash of her eyes, unsubdued by the long and weary penance to which her pale face and wasted figure bore testimony, were all parts of a haunting and elusive memory. She wondered to what order the woman belonged. The skirt of her robe was certainly very scant and shabby, and a faint line about the bottom reminded her of the mark left on her own black silk where she had lately ripped off a plaiting. A little starch and skilful manipulation might easily convert a pillow-case stiffly starched into one of

Digitized by Google

those large, square bonnets. But after a short time Mrs. Belden dismissed these wandering speculations from her mind, and, resuming her patchwork, was soon deeply absorbed in studying the arrangement of some "samples."

* * * * *

Several months sped by, and the good lady, in spite of her creditable resolutions, had taken no active step towards ascertaining the circumstances of her neighbours. One day had been too chilly, another too windy, a third too warm, to sally forth on her charitable errand. So she had contented herself with making a few inquiries of chance visitors. She had been laughed at for her pains. It was an axiom in the town that no worthy and industrious person could ever suffer for lack of food or raiment.

There came a day when the doctor was late to his six o'clock supper. The table was spread in the cosy dining-room and the tea simmered on the hearth. The young housewife vibrated between table and window. The little cathedral clock on the parlour mantel sounded the half-hour. The young wife busied herself picking off the dead leaves from a twining similax which stood in the window—so many withered leaves do the house-plants show in that exasperating climate.

The clock solemnly struck the hour of seven. The little woman had grown too accustomed to the exactions of a physician's life to feel more than impatient. She sat down to the table alone and tried to eat, but only succeeded in swallowing a cup of tea and a bit of fruit. Then she resumed her post at the window. A light rain was falling, which increased until it came in gusts and squalls, then settled into a steady downpour.

It was after nine o'clock when she descried a dark figure hurrying up the street. The gate opened and shut with a click, and the doctor bounded up the steps, to be met with a tearful greeting on the part of his wife.

"Oh, Robert, you don't know what I have suffered! I was so afraid that some of those dreadful men who are always——"

"Nonsense, child!" But his voice was shaky, and as he reached out his hand and laid a long morocco case on the table, she noticed that his face was pale and drawn.

"An operation, dear? What was it?"

He did not answer at once. Indeed, he sat down to the table and drank his cup of tea and ate a slice or two of bread-and-butter, chatting, meanwhile, in an absent way on indifferent topics. It was only when they had gone into the little parlour, and he had thrown himself into a great easy-chair before the glowing fire, that he recognised her question.

"A seven-year old boy, dear. Leg crushed. Stood it like a hero!"

"How did it happen—the injury, I mean?"

"Slipped and fell under a backing engine. They seem to have been pretty badly off—the mother and child—and the stoker of engine No. 26 had been in the habit of throwing off lumps of coal for the little fellow to pick up. To-day the lad tried to climb up before they had slowed down, and missed his footing and fell."

"How he must have suffered!"

"He never seemed to think of himself at all. Was possessed with a fear that the stoker might be blamed. Beautiful little fellow, in spite of his shabby clothes. Broad white forehead, curling brown hair, and thoughtful grey eyes. Do you know I can't get rid of a certain fancy that I've seen the child before."

"Probably in the streets," suggested Mrs. Belden.

"No, no. Years ago; when I was a boy, or in some other existence."

"Oh, madam, if others were only of your thinking!"

"Where do they live?"

"I declare, Bessie, I never suspected there was such destitution in this place. We had to perform the operation by the light of a coal-oil lamp. She held it."

"The mother?"

"Yes; and never flinched. Shielded it with her hand to keep the rain from putting out the light. In all my professional experience I never saw such self-command."

"Indifference I should call it," suggested the indignant listener.

"I don't know, my dear," he replied; "I don't know. When we got through I wondered that she did not move or stir. I looked at her, and her eyes were fixed upon the face of the unconscious child. I had to unclasp her hands from the lamp. Her fingers were cold and clammy; she was like a person in a cataleptic trance. I thought she was going to fall to the ground. But, instead——"

"Instead—what?"

"Instead, she insisted upon staying there alone to-night. Would not listen to our offer of watchers. Seemed in a hurry to get us off."

"But how can a child recover in such a place? It is criminal to leave him there."

"The townspeople may be a trifle uncivilised, my dear, but they are not wanting in the common attributes of humanity. The men have been busy this evening. They have rented that little house Brown's family vacated last week, and eighty pounds will be placed in bank to-morrow to the little boy's credit."

But the townspeople found that they had a difficult case with which to deal. Face to face with the exigencies of her situation, the mother consented to move to the house made ready for her, but she drew sparingly upon the funds placed to her credit, and took a careful inventory of everything the house contained, with a view to paying for everything as soon as she should be able.

In an inconceivably short time, thanks to the reactive

Digitized by Google

powers of healthy childhood, and the purer air the child was able to be about the house, blithe as a little maimed bird, on his single leg and crutch. The scant sewing that the mother could procure was ill-paid and inadequate for her needs, and she quietly opened another industry. She made the fact known that she was ready to wash soiled linen.

The doctor and his wife sometimes discussed the anomalous character of the woman with whom Fate had brought them in contact.

"I can't quite make her out," the doctor once remarked; "to look at her one would think her incapable of feeling—that she had scarcely a human instinct. She is developing into the hardest business woman I ever saw. Yet I am inclined to think that the night I first saw her she was stimulated by courage of the highest order, an heroic self-forgetfulness that conquered her own physical weakness."

"I understand her perfectly," returned his wife, with prompt feminine decision; "she is constructed on a different principle from ordinary women. Some gentle instinct of sympathy — of womanly tenderness—is wanting in her composition. I have seen her day after day, you know, my dear, and I ought to be able to judge. Though she is not a bad sort of woman at all," she generously conceded.

"Curious sort of name, isn't it?—Mrs. Ruthstan. It has a very fancy sound."

"It doesn't sound like a real name at all," returned Mrs. Belden severely. "Oh, she has a history behind her, and we shall know it some day, depend upon it."

It so happened that the very next day the doctor stumbled across an old friend, newly arrived in the place, and brought him home. "Bessie, you remember Jack Grosvenor—the oldest friend I have. You remember he would have been the best man at our wedding——"

"If he hadn't been busy getting married himself a thousand miles away. Yes, I remember, I am very glad to welcome you to our home, Mr. Grosvenor," said the doctor's wife, holding out her hand with a winning smile.

But there was no answering smile on the face of the man she so cordially greeted. She remembered her husband's description of the gay, light-hearted fellow, and tried to identify him with this sober-faced, reserved man, who had silently seated himself by the window.

Caught the fainting woman in his arms.

"Jack has just come back with a party from South Africa," exclaimed the doctor; "he is a rich man now."

"That is very good," said Mrs. Belden absently, wondering why her husband should have made such a point of his friend's business success, or speak of it as if it were of vital interest to her.

"I am glad for Jack," proceeded the doctor, a little awkwardly; "he has been telling me something of his experiences to-day—you don't mind my telling Bessie, Jack, I'm sure, do you?—and he's had a terribly hard pull. Worst of all, he lost his wife."

"I am very sorry——"

"No, not that way!" hastily interrupted the doctor; "lost sight of her. He left her in London three years ago. Heard from her once or twice, but his roaming life was not favourable to correspondence. Now he tells me he has lost all trace of her."

"How very strange!" Her woman's curiosity was roused. "And she was such a pretty woman, Mr. Grosvenor. I remember the lovely face of the photograph you sent us, when you were married. Such a dimpled, laughing face! Where was it I saw one that reminded me of it, not long ago?"

"I can't say it seems so very strange to me," remarked Grosvenor, taking part in the conversation for the first time, and speaking in a laboured, husky voice; "I wonder that she put up with it so long. We had had a hard time of it for years. You know how she had been reared up. She was a Miss Ruth Stanhope. I was never able to provide for her in the way she had been accustomed to at home. I left her with almost nothing. She was a proud, spirited woman. She tired of the struggle and went back to her friends. I had hoped she might hold on account of the boy."

"The boy? Then you had a child?"

Grosvenor assented with a mute gesture.

"Ruth Stanhope," repeated the doctor's wife slowly, looking steadily at her husband, who sent her back a significant glance; "and the boy—how old would your little son be now, Mr. Grosvenor?"

"A little more than seven years."

"Robert, I have an errand that must be attended to at once. You and Mr. Grosvenor will excuse me. I will not be long."

Mrs. Belden had snatched up a broad-brimmed hat

Digitized by Google

and was tying it under her chin as she spoke, her eyes kindled with excitement, her cheeks lit with a sudden flame. Jack Grosvenor, aroused from his apathy, looked curiously after her as she sped down the street, her head in a whirl. As she flew along the pavement she tried to balance and arrange the queer facts and strange memories that were flitting through her brain. She remembered something of the splendour of Jack Grosvenor's wedding, and the contrast it had presented to their own modest nuptials.

She recalled an account she had read of the marriage banquet and the list of the notable guests who were in attendance. She saw in anticipation the bare room she was about to enter, with its beggarly strip of rag carpeting along the centre, the bedstead with its worn coverlet, the wooden chairs, and the woman bent over the ironing board, contrasting it with the abounding comforts and generous hospitality of that earlier home.

A high wind was blowing, and clouds of dust darkened the air about her. Battling with the force of the storm, she yet found time to marvel at the strength of character that had enabled the petted girl, born and cradled in the lap of luxury, deliberately to renounce the life of ease open to her, and condemn herself and her child to the life of toil and hardship that had resulted so disastrously. The gentle woman's heart filled with love and sympathy, and she was ready to take Jack Grosvenor's wife into her arms and cry over her sorrows and humiliations.

Her heart was chilled at the sight of the cold, proud face, whose severity was increased by the piece of stiff, white muslin bound about the head as a protection from the smoke and coal-dust of the ironing-stove. Mrs. Belden looked in momentary abhorrence at the mass of lace and embroidery lying upon the ironing-board, guessing only too well the owners of that tawdry splendour.

"What! do you work for them?"

For a moment the woman calmly gazed upon her questioner, then turned with an expressive glance to the low pallet where her boy lay sleeping, by his side the crutch that must be his life-long companion.

Notwithstanding the mother's impassive demeanour, the eyes of the visitor filled with sudden tears. She twirled her hat-strings and searched the cold face, wondering how she had best communicate the tidings of which she was the bearer. She observed the dignified movement of the tall figure across the room, the shapely hand that changed the cool iron for a fresh one, and she remembered how the same hand had held a light without flinching, while the little boy's limb was being taken off. With what a disdainful front she had faced poverty, and how sternly she had repelled those who offered sympathy and help. Such a woman would never have nerve for anything. Why should she plan to spare her what would at most be little more than a slight surprise.

Mrs. Belden ended by flinging all her scruples to the wind.

"My husband's old friend, Jack Grosvenor, is at our house."

"Alive?"

The word spoke volumes. The pain and agony of years were concentrated in the cry. The hot iron she was holding dropped upon the lace draperies and burnt its way through them, as she clutched at the table to steady herself, while her brown eyes sought her visitor's with a look of piteous intreaty.

"Is—it—true?" she pleaded.

There was no need of answer. A man's step sounded outside, and the door was flung open, and Jack Grosvenor, returned to something like his old, impetuous self, strode across the room and caught the fainting woman in his arms. The white turban fell back from the pale face, its rigid features relaxed into a happy smile, and the doctor's wife, struck by the transformation was startled with a sudden recognition and murmured softly:

"Sister Veronica!"

Flora Haines Loughead.

STILL ON SALE . . . . . No. 4 of ☞ ***Pearson's Magazine.***

THE CONTENTS INCLUDE:

Gates and Pillars of the Empire. *Robert Machray.*
No. 1.—Liverpool Illustrated.

The Mountain of Valour. *Sir Evelyn Wood.*
Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood.

Soldier an' Sailor too. *Rudyard Kipling.*
Illustrated by Georges Montbard.
One of Mr. Kipling's most brilliant poems.

The Men who will Lead if War Comes. *Archibald Forbes.*
Illustrated with photographs.
An interesting statement by one of the greatest living authorities upon this subject.

Secrets of the Courts of Europe. *Allen Upward.*
No. IV.—The True Story of Prince Bismarck's Fall.
Illustrated by Hal Hurst, R.B.A.

The Bravest Deed I ever Saw. *Marquis of Lorne, K.T.*
Illustrated by Sydney Cowell.

How the Frontiers of Europe are Kept. *Levin Carnac.*
Illustrated by H. Piffard.

Loved I not Honour More. *Sir Walter Besant and W. H. Pollock.*
Illustrated by Chris Hammond.

Verse { **A Retrospect.** *George Chetwynd.* / **A Waking Dream.** *Clarence Hope.*

With other stories and articles by Ian Maclaren, H. J. W. Dam, W. L. Alden, Nellie K. Blissett, J. F. Sullivan, Winifred Graham, etc., etc.

While work by the following artists appear in addition to those mentioned above: G. G. Manton, George Ashton, R. Sauber, R.B.A., H. Piffard, Charles May, A. Kemp Tebby, A. Ludovici, etc., etc

PRICE 6d. NETT. ***PRICE 6d. NETT.***

Charmed by a Waltz.

HE was the most interesting murderer I ever met. Before the crime he was a private in my company and section, and even the captain thought him an excellent soldier. During his confinement in the guard-room, which lasted over a month, his actions were those of acute mania, so that the sergeant of the guard did not enter his cell.

He was as restless as a hyena, and paced his cell with a monotony of movement almost hypnotic to one watching him through the bars of his cage. When I was sergeant of the guard I would lie on the hard guard bed and look through the small, iron-latticed window in the centre of the door that opened into the prisoner's room, and see him in his cell, where the view of his legs and feet was cut off, by the lintel of the window. Dimly through the iron meshes I would watch the slow, regular movements of his body as it passed from end to end of his cage, like a human pendulum, beating in death strokes the time which elapsed until it must swing into eternity. In spite of the horrors which it suggested, this vision fascinated my attention, and if watched for long seldom failed to produce sleep, for the prisoner kept constantly crooning the insistent measures of a popular waltz.

All through the sultry night the sentry on number one could hear the sharp click of his steps on the concrete floor of his cell, beating regular accompaniments to the accented notes of this recurrent strain. Before trial, Davis, our surgeon, was ordered to examine the prisoner's sanity, and I went with him. He was still pacing his cell and slowly humming "The Blue Danube."

It was during this very waltz, played by the orchestra the night of the regimental dance, that he had brutally butchered Corporal Jenkins with a long-bladed knife, so it struck me as appropriate that this same air should now be a monomania in his madness and control his brain. As he paced his cell he was beating time to the swing of the waltz with a pencil by way of *bâton*. Davis asked the officer of the guard to have the prisoner brought into the general prison room, but the latter replied that the man was raving mad, and that it was folly to think of letting him from his cell or of sending men to enter it.

Davis then asked for the key, quietly unlocked the cage and opened it. As he did so the prisoner wheeled in his promenade and sprang towards him. Davis stepped quickly aside and struck him a half blow behind the ear, which felled him. Then we carried him into the general prison room, where Davis made an examination, during which the prisoner struggled for freedom with a nervous, weakening strength, as, assisted by a file of the guard, I held him pinioned to the floor. "The man seems insane," said Davis, speaking quietly to the officer of the guard. "Does anyone know the exact hour and minute at which the stabbing of Corporal Jenkins occurred?"

"It was exactly ten o'clock," replied the officer of the guard. "Sergeant Morrow stated in examination before the colonel that 'last post' was sounding just as he entered the dance room, and at that moment the stabbing occurred."

"Were they playing 'The Blue Danube' at the time?" Davis asked. I replied that Sergeant Morrow had told me they were. I had mentioned to Morrow that Henderson raved constantly in this tune. "Ah, then!" said Davis, speaking in a low tone to the officer of the guard, "then I understand his case. This is a very peculiar form of monomania. The waltz, the dominant sound during the act of murder, will rule his waking hours day and night, for it was then the madness struck in and phonographed it on the brain. In this form of insanity the brain acts like the sensitive plate of a phonograph to receive the ruling sound of the moment and will repeat it incessantly until the brain wears itself out. If the madness be complete there will be but one break; that will occur exactly at ten o'clock, when the prisoner will cease humming the waltz, and re-enact the tragedy. After a few moments the impression of the murder will pass away, when he will again resume the waltz."

I was impressed by the clear statement Davis made

Digitized by Google

on what seemed to me a most difficult case. Lieutenant ——, the orderly officer, was also struck by it, for he asked if he should send the prisoner into the hospital. "No," replied Davis, "keep him confined in his cell, and, without being observed, watch him closely about ten o'clock for the completing symptoms. You can report to me in the morning." Then he replaced Henderson in his cell, who at once took up his musical promenade.

I was detailed that night to watch him, and did so from my bunk in the guardroom. I had cautioned the bugler of the guard to warn me quietly when he left the guardroom to sound "last post." All through the evening I witnessed the same monotonous movement and listened to the same monotonous waltz, chanted slowly as always before. At intervals I would rouse myself and step outside the guardroom and stand in the cool sallyport to assure myself that I was awake and my vision unimpaired, so drowsy would I become under the effort of strained attention. I must finally have fallen asleep, for the bugler touched me on the shoulder and startled me. I did not see him enter, but could have sworn I was still viewing Henderson's movements in the cage.

I placed my face against the latticed window, looking into his cage, which he was still mechanically pacing. Then, as the first note of "last post" sounded, he stopped and reared as quickly as a stag is startled when he first hears a hostile shot that has struck wide and knows not whence it came. The waltz ceased, and in a moment I had all but seen the stabbing of Jenkins—then, as always before, the waltz again.

In the morning I reported. It was clearly a case of acute madness, or no one who ever performed a tour of guard duty with Henderson had ever seen madness. but, to our astonishment and horror, the surgeon thought otherwise, and so officially reported.

The colonel was furious. He had inspected the man—the man was mad! He called up Davis and informed him of the facts. Davis replied firmly: "The man is sane, colonel, and I so reported."

"He's not sane!" the colonel retorted. "Why influence me to stir up a civil murder trial, which plays the dickins with discipline. He should be sent to an asylum!"

Ten years ago Davis would have explained patiently and at length why he thought Henderson sane, but since these callow days he had once offered gratuitous information to a superior in command, so he said simply: "I'm not influencing you to do anything, colonel, unless it is permitting you to do your duty by doing mine."

Davis spoke with the gentle firmness of one struggling to be respectful. The word "permitting" had been delicately chosen, and passed below the colonel's guard.

"That will do, doctor," said the colonel stiffly, his colour rising, as Davis left the office. Even after long Indian service has killed your respect for a man, his opinions are still entitled to it, for they are usually the result of experiences that have cost the man dearly. Yet my faith in Davis weakened. It takes more than five years' confidence in a human being to outweigh our own fallible deductions even on subjects of which we are variously ignorant. The egotism of being rational is so pleasingly pleasant. Still, the colonel sent Henderson to civil trial, and bullied Davis in the hope that he would stop it.

The trial was held, and many attended it. Before it proceeded to the arrangement, the court summoned Davis for opinion. Again the same reports he had made so confidently to the colonel. Everyone was dissatisfied, and the court proceeded to trial. The colonel again called Davis up. "Davis," said he bluntly, "this has gone far enough. I was a witness in that man's trial to-day, and the man is mad, and the court and everyone knows it except you, who of all persons should know it. I don't want a man of my regiment to be hanged unless I'm convinced that he deserves it. Now, stop your professional stubbornness, and request some one in consultation before the verdict. Would you have a crazy man hanged?"

"The man's as sane as you are, colonel, and even grant he is not—which I don't—the class of insanity which he affects, if real, would be subsequent to the act, so he would be punishable whenever reason or a lucid interval appeared. It would be only a little too kind to hang him now, that is all," replied the surgeon. So the trial concluded and Henderson was sentenced to be hanged. On petition of the colonel, a stay of execution was granted until medical experts could be summoned from Calcutta.

These, after consultation with Davis, pronounced the prisoner sane.

During the week before the day set for his execution, Henderson confessed his feigned insanity to me while I was taking him some tobacco, and said that he felt kindly towards everyone for his treatment in trial except the surgeon, who had played it on him that he might hang. "If I only had my liberty long enough to kill Davis," he said to me one day, "I'd die happy." He said to me that I had been good to him; I had fetched him some clean clothes and tobacco, and that he would reward me. Then he outlined how he had killed a rich Hindoo near Delhi, three years before, that he had robbed him of gold which he had buried, and that he had intended to return for the treasure and had never done so. Then he gave minute directions as to place and exact locality and amount of the buried gold.

"Henderson," I asked, when he had finished, "are you still crazy, or are you only lying?"

"Neither," he said simply. "As I mount the scaffold I'll incline my head towards you, which is to affirm, in the presence of eternity, that I speak the truth."

The day before his execution he told me he had forgiven everyone, even Davis, who had only done his duty, and to tell him that now he invited him to come and see him hanged.

After my discharge I actually went up to Delhi and followed the rascal's directions, but found no buried money, though the old Hindoo had been murdered, as stated. Shortly afterwards I met Mr. Davis, and told him of my chase. He laughed pleasantly, and then I asked him:

"Doctor, would you mind telling me how you could be so certain that Henderson was not really insane?"

"Why, you should know that," he said, with a slight twinkle. "You helped me to establish the fact. Do you recall that I gave you a diagnosis of his case before his cell, and had you placed on guard to observe the completing symptoms?"

"Yes, but he really showed them."

"So would you, had you been feigning insanity, as he was doing, and overheard me, and believed, as until now you evidently did believe, that I spoke the truth."

I now understood Henderson's extreme bitterness towards Davis, who had duped him into self-conviction.

Harry Rogers.

Digitized by Google

THE WINNING OF GUNHILD

By George C. Wallis, *Author of "Behind the Barrier," etc., etc.*

CHAPTER I.

The Bringing Home of Olaf.

The little group of women at the landing place were very busy with their tongues as they watched the black ship coming slowly up the fjord, the shining shields hung on her sides, and the broad-bladed oars dipping regularly in the water as she came through the purple shadow of the great cliffs and then out again into the full blaze of the summer sun. The *Swallow* was not expected back at North-hold so soon from her voyage of vengeance, "and surely," said Editha, "they return with victory, or they would not be here at all."

Yet there was a note of fear in the Norse-woman's voice as she said this, for no flag fluttered from the mast, as was the custom when the Vikings came home in triumph, and as the ship drew nearer it was plainly seen that the rows of shields had great gaps in them and that the men on board seemed few and the oarsmen put no heart in their work. A murmur went through the waiting group, and Gunhild, who stood by her mother's side, gave a little cry of alarm.

"I see but one of my brothers standing in the prow, mother," she said trembling. "Think you that evil man, Valstran, has slain one of them?"

"Hush, child!" said Editha, "or your father will chide you for a weakling! 'Tis Sigismund you see, and he will tell us where Olaf is, if he has not brought him home. Keep a brave heart, Gunhild,"—as the golden-haired girl clung in fear to her arm—"befitting the daughter of Bjorne and Editha; and not like the women of the south!"

"But even Harald wept when he found his father Asli slain, and Valstran gone," said Gunhild.

"Ay, child, and so would any in whom the kindness of Baldar was instilled from the first," said Freyda, stepping forward and taking the girl's soft hand in her own. "Ay, and so would you, Editha, if aught had happened to your Olaf then!"

"If aught had!" cried the resolute woman going towards the steps to meet the returning warriors, "but I think the gods will guard him well; it was so foretold."

The Vikings were at the landing now, but instead of leaping ashore as he was used to do, Sigismund hung back gloomily while the men took something gently from the deck and carried it slowly up the steps and through the silently-parting crowd

Reverently lifted the sail-cloth from the something on which all eyes were turned.

Digitized by Google

to the feet of Editha, there laying it tenderly down, without speaking a word.

Then Sigismund followed from the ship—which all saw to be so badly battered and splintered as to be scarcely seaworthy—and motioned to Harald Aslison and his man Eric, and they bent and reverently lifted the sail-cloth from the something on which all eyes were turned.

For a moment Editha stood as if carved in stone. Bjorne's face grew white and drawn. Gunhild gave a cry of terror, and Sigismund drew near and looked on with haggard eyes. Then the woman broke out angrily to the dead son's brother:

"This is your care of him! This is the guarding strength of your ready arm. This—nithing, craven, sleepy one! This is what you dare to bring me home when I want my Olaf as he was when he went away—beautiful as Baldar and strong as Thor. This is how you dare to bring him back to me—coward, outcast one, no longer a son of mine!"

"Have patience, wife," said old Bjorne, striding forward to gaze nearer upon the calm features of his youngest son as he lay there so still, with his sword upon his breast, his shield upon it, and the war-axe at his side. "Have patience, wife, till Sigismund has spoken. This is an evil day for us, but I would fain know whether he died in fair fight, with his face to the foe, so that he went straight to Valhalla."

"Yes, weak one, tell us how it is you bring him home to us thus!" cried Editha wildly, stroking the face of the dead with quivering hand. "Tell us! tell us!"

For all answer Sigismund shook back his cloak from his left shoulder, and they saw that where his left arm should have been was only a bandaged stump, scarcely reaching to the elbow. And then, seeing their horror-stricken gaze, he said, slowly:

"This was done by the last stroke but one of the battle-axe of Valstran. The last laid Olaf low."

With a stifled cry Editha sprang forward and seized him in her arms, and wept over him as if her heart would break. Sigismund took her by the arm and led her away and into the house. And some of the thralls picked up the rude bier and carried the dead after them, and Freyda and Gunhild followed, weeping together.

Then Bjorne turned to the sailors, saying, without a quiver in his voice, though his lips were pale and his eyes wet with tears that he fought back as only an old Viking could:

"How came you to be beaten by the Danes, Algar, and yet escape from their clutches?"

Harald and the others crowded round as the battle-scarred seaman made reply:

"It is very simple, Earl Bjorne. We took the *Swallow* straight to Denmark and up the creek to Valstran's lair, for your sons were eager to avenge their uncle's death before Harald should return to North-hold and come to their aid; and, having news of our coming, the Dane met us with two long ships filled with men, and attacked us in the narrows of the creek. We fought stubbornly, I can tell you, Earl, and none of us so well as Sigismund, who saved his brother a full score times before Valstran slew him with the swinging axe. As they numbered three men to each one of us and boarded us from both sides at once, Sigismund gave word, when Olaf fell, to be going home, and we cut the grappling chains and got away, and being the swiftest vessel of the three, left Valstran raging on the high seas. That is all, Earl Bjorne."

There was a moment's silence, and then old Bjorne raised his right hand to the heavens and swore by Odin that if Valstran lived to see next Yuletide, he would go to meet him despite his age and stiffness of limb.

"Ay, though he slay me with the same axe with which he has slain my son Olaf and my brother Asli, I will try my steel on him!" he cried.

"He shall not be alive next Yuletide, father," said Sigismund, who had come out of the house with Harald's mother, Freyda, "for even one-armed as I am, I will yet have revenge on him. Thanks be to the gods that it is my right arm that is whole and sound."

"And I, too, will go!" cried Harald—"I, who would have gone before but that you two were too quick for me, and my father's old ship was burnt. Men call me Long-

Old Bjorne raised his hand to the heavens.

sword in derision, because I carry the blade that old Thrunna the armourer made just before he died, and will have no other. They laugh at me because I have as yet done no deed of valour that entitles me to wear the golden wings, but I tell you all that I shall do a deed yet that will make you old warriors burn with envy, and make my long sword a name in the land!"

"If you also will rashly throw away your life and leave me alone with little Thelma," said Freyda sadly, "woe is me. But as it is my own unfortunate face that has wrought this mischief—for Valstran was an old love of mine, and for that slew Asli—it is, perhaps, decreed that on me must fall the greatest burden. Go, Harald, and may the Hammer-Thrower guard thee!"

And the pale-faced woman, still beautiful despite her years, bent and kissed Harald on the forehead, and then left them.

Long after supper that night the men sat and talked

Digitized by Google

over their plans of retaliation, and many were the foaming horns of good, strong, home-brewed ale that they emptied ere they were satisfied to seek their couches and a needed sleep. And this is what they decided.

As the *Swallow* was not fit to take out without repair, they would launch the new ship that had just been built at North-hold—the *Walrus*—and loading her with as many men as she could carry, set out the next day, and so come upon Valstran before he expected them. A good crew would more easily be got together now, because Harald and his men had returned from the inland, and his mother and all her household had come to live with Earl Bjorne at his great hall. There would be no lack of men, therefore, both to guard the house and to fill the *Walrus* with a staunch crew.

CHAPTER II.

The Were-Woman's Words.

Now Harald was in love with his cousin Gunhild—as, truth to tell, fair Gunhild was in love with him—and so, in the early dawn, before the war-worn men were astir, the son of Asli rose and went out across the fields to where the fjord broadened out into a gravel-shored lake of still, deep water, unfathomable as the dark blue eyes of his sister Thelma. It may have been that Harald went thither because he knew it to be a favourite walk of Gunhild's from when they played together as children, or it may not—these things are hard to say—but however it was, he had not long to wait before Gunhild also came tripping lightly down the home-path, her white arms locked upon the snowy coif that bound her glorious golden hair, and her blue eyes glancing merriment that not even last night's sorrow could dispel.

Their gaze fell on Harald and Gunhild.

And Harald, seeing her coming down the pasture edge, the colour of her cheeks out-matching the thousand pink and white flowers that she passed on her way, and the sweetness and charm of her lithe, supple figure blotting out for him the beauty of the dissolving mist in the hollows and the dew-hung gossamer tracery on the bushes by the water-side, thought that surely there was never so fair a maiden before in all Norseland!

And when she came blushing up to him, Harald sprang forward and clasped her in his great, strong arms and kissed her on the lips before she could resist—which, when she did, was very gently done.

"You are not angry with me, dear one?" questioned Harald, as the girl slipped out of his embrace, "not angry with one who has loved you ever since he can remember?"

"If I would be, I cannot, Harald!" said Gunhild, putting her hand in his again and a soft light gleaming from her blue eyes, "'twas only a maiden's bashfulness that made me draw back, and surely you know how to deal with that—if you have not yet won name and fame for my sake!"

Then Harald knew that she was his from that day henceforth, and a great joy seized him, and as sweet-lipped Gunhild nestled to him and he kissed and kissed again that lovely face which shone with pleasure pure as the light of the northern sky, he took vow by all the gods of Asgard that never would he rest till he had won fortune and renown and could claim her for his wife without fear of refusal from her father. And Gunhild was very happy in his love, and strengthened his resolve.

"I pray that the Nornas* have so decreed it," said she, "that you are the chosen to avenge Asli and Olaf, and in so doing to win the wings and then me; but," she went on, after he had kissed those pretty lips again, "I have some fear of my father's love of riches and the favours of some of his distant friends. You know that wealthy Turgrimm sent messengers some weeks ago to say that he would repeat his visit, and he is a man of great influence at the Folk-Thing, and will help the Earl with his land troubles if some boon be granted him in return."

"And it will be you whom he will want," cried Harald, his brow darkening like the brow of Thor the Thunderer when the storm-clouds gather; "and still I am fameless, and know of no quarrel I can pick with him. I am but a poor man."

"Yet have patience and hope, dear heart," said Gunhild gently, her slight fingers playing with the drooping yellow curls upon his upper lip; "you will make a beginning to-day to gain these things you lack, and while you are gone I will pray unceasingly to Wunsch to grant your desires—for it would be a hard lot for me, Harald, if I had to be the bride of another, though I dare not tell the Earl, my father, as much."

Then the two young lovers, happy while the sun shone on their early lives, sat down awhile on a large stone at the foot of the rising ground, and talked of much that would be very interesting to hear, but most profitless to write, and then parted and went home by different ways.

Now, so engrossed were Gunhild and Harald with their own company whilst they were talking together, that neither of them noticed a fierce-faced woman, with matted hair, crouching just behind the bushes, nor heard the slight movement of her feet on the ground when she bent nearer to catch the import of their conversation. And had either of them known that she was there, their hearts would not have pulsed so lightly that morning, for every thrall and freeman in the garth and homestead of North-hold knew the evil repute, and stood in awe of the ill-will and dire spells of Svenda, the witch, the Were-woman, who was so clever at reading obscure runes, and foretelling death and disaster and plague. And very few there were, excepting the evil-minded—who bought her questionable aid in times of need by various presents—who cared to pass her cave in the hill above the Rainbow Falls at night or alone.

She was early up and about that morning, having doubtless seen some of the commotion of yestereve, and it would have sent a thrill of horror through anyone to have seen the ghoul-like glitter of her fiery, deep-set eyes when their gaze fell on Harald and Gunhild sitting in converse on the mossy stone.

She drew near to them like a cat stealing on her prey, remaining quite still until they rose to depart, making no sound even when she stretched forward to hear more distinctly, and in so doing espied a young stint running out of a hemlock shrub towards the lake margin for his morning meal of water-flies. Fearing that they might glance that way and see her if he ran across where she crouched, Svenda rose up a moment and breathed an incantation silently with her lips, and cast her hands vindictively towards him, so that the merry little creature stopped in his career and shivered from snout to tail, and rolled over and, with a feeble gasp, expired. Svenda shrank back to her crouching position, waiting till the two parted, then rose and ambled clumsily but swiftly after Gunhild, overtaking the light-hearted girl at the stone across the brook.

"You seem merry of mien this morning, proud one," said the Were-woman, laying her scraggy hand on Gunhild's shoulder, "very merry, considering that death is in your house! For I know, you see, my ruddy-haired one,

* The *Nornas* were the *Three Fates*—past, present, future—of the Norse mythology.

Digitized by Google

though the news was spoken to me by no human lips, and all shun me as the people of the southlands shun keen-biting Thrymm.* Ha! ha!" and she laughed horribly.

Gunhild quailed a moment, then tossed her head haughtily and would have gone on, but the Were-woman continued:

"Be not in haste to leave me, pretty one—you have stayed long with your lover—and I can soon tell you that which I came to say. You sent me from your door—you and your stern mother—when I came begging to you; sent me away with scorn and anger when I offered to read the future for you; and for that I hate all you Bjornes, and you, milk-faced one, all the more because love smiles on your path. Silly wench! I tell you that a sea of blood and tears is awaiting you and your fameless lover, and hardly shall he win you at the end."

"Let me pass, wretched woman!" cried Gunhild, pushing aside the bony hand that was outstretched to clutch and detain her, "let me pass, for I trust Odin more than to believe your evil tale."

"Ay! go, girl," said the Were-woman, with a mocking gesture, "go your way and meet your troubles as you will! Death and sorrow and blood—red, streaming blood—are foredoomed to fall upon you and your love and your house, and the smell of the crimson gore is already in the air and on the fields and the crops! And in the day of your desolation remember the Were-woman of the cave and know that she is laughing at you—laughing!—as she laughed when your Olaf came in dead! Ay, go, and let that be your comfort!"

But Gunhild had leaped the brook, and with fingers to her ears had sped away out of reach of the cursing hag into the home-garden, and so, with an evil smile and a strange arm-crossing motion, the Were-woman turned and was gone.

CHAPTER III.

The Treachery of Turgrimm.

The *Walrus* was let down her sliding planks and out upon rollers into the fjord, her virgin timbers raising a curving cloud of spray about her figure-head as her prow clove the still waters. A faint cheer went up from the little crowd gathered to watch her depart.

Harald and Sigismund stood high in the stern as the rowers pulled the long ship out into the mid-channel, and as far as they could be seen from the landing-place remained there, waving their swords in the sunlight in parting token to the women-folk they left behind, neither of the cousins speaking until the great cliffs were rounded and the only living thing in view was an osprey circling slowly in the clear air.

Then Harald said, with hand on his cousin's arm:

"We have seen the last of North-hold, Sigismund, and of all those near and dear to us, unless we slay the Dane."

And Sigismund answered that that was his thought, too, and then, too full for much speech, strode forward and sat silent on a coil of rope, with his back to the bulwark.

So they sailed on down that wild, rugged coast of jutting rocks and deep inlets, and after many days came to the mouth of the Sound. Late one afternoon the keen eyes of Eric discovered two ships scudding along southward before the rising gale.

It did not take long for the Vikings to be alert and at their posts, and for full sail to be put on despite the risk of a coming storm. As the *Walrus* leapt through the water after the flying ships like a living creature after her prey, Sigismund, standing up in the prow in the full brunt of the sea-spume cloud that rose from the sharp-cutting keel, recognised the ships as the ships of Valstran and cried out to the rowers to out their blades and bend to their work like men.

"The wolf has not yet returned to his lair!" he said to Harald, as the two tested their weapons afresh and the latter lovingly polished that long sword of his that was as yet new to its work, "he will therefore be short of some of his men. We must catch him out here in the open sea if the Aegar will let us."

"Let the Aegar come and bring what storm he will," replied Harald, "we shall get up with yonder vessels, for I see they are not over swift. Pull, you hardy warriors, pull! Put your muscles into it, and with our steel and the tempest's fury we will leave the ships of yonder Dane a couple of wrecks before the night be gone."

But little need was there to urge on those lusty Vikings! They burnt for revenge as much as their two leaders, and very soon the *Walrus* drew close up under the stern of the rearmost Dane, the bellying sails and the long, powerful

The Walrus.

sweeps of the big oars sending the great ship churning through the water at matchless speed, the salt sleet dashing halfway across her deck before its wet advance was checked by the breath of the storm that howled behind.

Now Valstran was a wily sailor, and seeing that he could not get away from the enemy, waited with hand on the steering-oar and eye on the main-sail of his own ship till the *Walrus* came foaming on like some great avenging monster through the tempest-tossed and white-crested sea, and just as the long, gleaming tusk of the walrus head grazed his stern, gave word to furl sails and draw in blades, and the other vessel following suit, the two parted slightly and suddenly slowed down, while the Norse ship came ploughing on between them unable to stop, and the two keels mowed down the banks of oars and threw the rowers into confusion. And ere Harald could get his men into order, the grappling chains were cast and secured, some one sent a long axe tearing through the sail, splitting it cornerwise, and from both sides the boarders leapt upon them and began the fight.

It was a wild encounter, that of the avenging Norsemen and the desperate Danes, plying their heavy axes and keen swords on each other there in the mid ship of the three, that bound together, rose and fell with the up and down heave of the raging sea, the sound of the strife now rising harsh and strong above the whistle of the wind in the cordage and anon being drowned in the angry roar of the storm and the lash of the driven rain.

But the men of North-hold soon recovered from their momentary panic, and being at least as many in number as the others, drove them back a space, making better foothold for themselves, and for a time held their own against the plundering sea-rovers of Valstran.

Then the Dane, full of evil resource, bade some of his men cut down the mast of his smallest ship so that it would fall crosswise on the deck of the *Walrus*, and though skilful Eric saw the foul trick and laid low three of the men with

* *Thrymm*, God of Frost.

Digitized by Google

his arrows, down came the broken, splintering pole full across the deck, bringing with it what little sail was left up and falling with a sounding crash into the midst of the struggling Norsemen.

Algar, and Hrolf the Ready-Witted, and Edred the Silent, and three more, all good men of North-hold and trusty servants of Bjorne, were stricken down under the hammer-like blow of that mast, and Valstran and his Danes, seizing their chance, leapt over the barrier it formed and plunged into the backward-surging crowd of their foes with shouts of victory.

Harald and Sigismund were forced off their feet by the rush and carried helpless before it to the stern ere they got the use of their arms again, and then so blinding was the flying spray and so keen the blast of the tempest, which had now veered round to the south-west, that it was difficult to distinguish one foe from another and their hands could scarcely hold their weapons. The night had also come down on the sea, dark as Hela and full of lowering storm-clouds and incessant deluges of rain.

Yet Harald, standing high on the woodwork to see where Valstran fought, if possible, caught a glimpse, as the three ships rose on the boiling crest of a great wave, of a long, high-ended vessel just sliding down the front of another billow to windward, coming along under bare poles. Raising his voice, Harald roared a lusty hail into the wild grey night as the ships plunged into the trough of the sea again, and the other sank from view, and presently the huge wooden beak of a hawk came through the foam to starboard, and an answering hail as the long ship drew out and was passing.

Harald rushed forward, long-sword in hand.

"In the name of Odin, from what parts do you come, who can fight in this storm?"

"'Tis I, Harald, late of Svolvaer, with sundry friends, and we are at war with Valstran the Dane," cried Gunhild's cousin, wondering where he had heard that rasping voice before. "Come and help us, for we are sore pressed, and this Valstran has no more honour than a wild beast!"

"And why should I help you, Harald Aslison?" sneered the rasping voice out of the dull greyness of the storm, "I, Turgrimm, have no quarrel with the Dane."

"If it is Turgrimm, you have," roared Harald back again as well as he could across the seething cauldron of the ocean, "for Asli my father, Gunhild's uncle, lies dead at this Valstran's hands, with others dear to her and me."

As it happened, this was the worst thing Harald could have said to the old Viking bully of the *Hawk*, who himself had designs on Gunhild, and had noticed, on his former visit to North-hold, how the son of Asli had watched the daughter of Bjorne as she went about the household duties, and so, instead of trying to put about and beat back to the rescue, Turgrimm held on his way, shouting in derision as the distance widened that he had no time that night to stop his vessel and share in the conflict in aid of a rash young boaster of no fame.

One glance only Harald caught of a grim, surly-faced old man with most repulsive eye, standing in the stem of his ship, and then the storm and the blackness swallowed up the sight, and with it all hope of relief.

As he sprang down into the fight again Harald saw with dismay that his men were slowly giving back, that Sigismund was sorely wounded and hard-pressed because of the loss of his left arm, and that Valstran raged along the deck with victorious fury, his long, heavy battleaxe finding none strong enough to bar its progress.

Harald rushed forward, long-sword in hand, and met the Dane, there was a short passage of arms, and down came that swinging, shining, red-dripping axe through the rain, its keen edge catching his plain helm sideways, throwing him to the deck.

And as he fell Harald caught sight of a rush of faces and heard the clash of clanging steel, and then all was dark and still.

CHAPTER IV.

The Bribing of Bjorne.

The day was bright and clear, though chilly for the season, when the *Hawk* forged up the road before North-hold, and there let down her anchor. A goodly number of vikings and servants, well laden with costly presents for his host, followed Turgrimm to the great hall, and when he met the old Earl the sinister-looking suitor for Gunhild smiled a smile that was evil to see.

He came at a most opportune time he thought, and the only rival he seriously feared was by then, he hoped, a good many fathoms under the waves off the Danish coast: so he was determined that golden-haired Gunhild, whether she liked him or not, should go back with him as his wife.

They had buried Olaf when he arrived, and in honour of the guest's wealth and rank, Earl Bjorne had a good supper laid at night in the hall, and feasted Turgrimm to his heart's content. Long they drank and talked, and loudly the men of Turgrimm laughed as the strong ale

Digitized by Google

warmed them to jollity, while the home-folk sat around for the most part soberly silent, full of the sorrow of the last days, and of thought for their heroes away.

Editha, and Gunhild, and Freyda left the banqueters ere the night was far gone, and then one by one the men stole out or fell asleep beside their empty cups; and when Turgrimm saw this he signed to the old Earl and drew him apart to the far end of the long room, and there told his errand.

Old Bjorne stroked his grizzly chin, sorely troubled; he well knew his guest's desire, and how much he himself stood in need of assistance to get hold of that piece of land he coveted, yet he loved Gunhild well, and more dearly now that one of his sons was taken from him and the other in equal danger.

"You know, Earl," went on Turgrimm in his rasping unpleasant voice, "that my word and will carry great weight at the Thing, for I have much land and am rich, and if you want those fertile acres down by the lakeside yonder for your own—well, they shall be yours, I swear, if you will grant me Gunhild for my wife."

"Give her to you, I might," said Bjorne, "but think you that of her own free will she will choose you?"

"That must be seen," answered the other with a grim smile, "and will be seen shortly, but first give your consent, that I may have a fair chance, for she is a dutiful daughter, I trow."

"Ay," said the old man thoughtfully gazing down the dimly-lighted hall where the revellers lay snoring on the trestle tables; "ay, a very dutiful girl, Turgrimm, and I trust that she will look on you with favour. For the rest, tell her that I am willing, and after she has decided we will talk again."

"So be it," said Turgrimm, as kindly as his rough tongue would allow, and then Bjorne led his guest to the sleeping chamber set apart for strangers, and left him for the night.

Now Gunhild was up early the next morning, more with idea to get away from the house and find some solitude in which to think on her besetting danger than for any other reason, and early, too, was Turgrimm. Not far from the gravel shore of the lake where she and Harald had told their love, the Viking caught her up and poured into her ear such clumsy words and phrases as with him did duty for a declaration of undying affection and regard.

"Pretty one!" he said awkwardly, while the girl shrank from his touch. "You are not frightened at me surely; at me—who am wealthy and can grant all that your fancy may desire?"

"You cannot make me love you," said Gunhild, edging away at each step he made towards her, "and as for your riches, keep them, or bestow them on some old woman of your own age."

"You are sharp of tongue, my pretty one," cried Turgrimm, attempting and failing to seize the slender fingers between his own; "but I pray you to think twice before you refuse me, for your father has given his consent, and mine you will have to be whether you will or no, because my will knows no bending to another's!"

This and much more he said more or less clumsily, but Gunhild was not moved to aught save alternate laughter and scorn, and at last slipped past him and flew down the path towards home with a heavy heart, and left the Viking standing there by the lake with a black scowl on his evil face and mortification and rage and stern resolve in his evil heart.

Early that day he sought out Earl Bjorne, and with a very bad grace told him of his failure, and demanded that Gunhild be given to him forthwith, and the wedding-day fixed as soon as the women-folk could be ready.

"I would fain wait till Sigismund and Harald come home," said the old Earl hesitatingly. "To give up Gunhild will be a heavy price for this land."

"Then to this land that you want—and that is very good and desirable land"—put in the crafty Turgrimm, "and to all the rich cloth-stuffs and jewels I have brought you, and the aid of my fighting men in all your future quarrels or needs, I will add a new long ship from my own building-shed—a ship that shall be fleeter than any now on Viking cruise."

Right skilfully he worked on the one weak place in the old Earl's mind—the love of money that was his one besetting sin—and so, though inwardly ill at ease, Bjorne gave the promise at last on condition that Turgrimm, on his part, fulfilled his offer. It was a heavy bribe for a girl in those warlike times, and, to do him justice, Bjorne thought that with a man who was ready to give so much for her, Gunhild could not well be unhappy.

Turgrimm went about with a most insufferable air of mastery the next few days, though he was not at Gunhild's side so much as an accepted suitor should be, nor so happy when there as another who was far away would have been. He felt a strange uneasiness about the possibilities of some survivor from the sea-fight coming to condemn him and snatch the prize away just when it was within his grasp, and he was ever urging on the submissive Bjorne—who was already counting his gain—to hasten the ceremony, that he might sail away to Dertheim and there instal Gunhild as the mistress of his home.

But the women would not be hurried. They disliked the overbearing thane and spared no ingenuity to delay the fateful hour, and some sharp words had Bjorne heard from Editha, and many tearful intreaties from Gunhild herself, who longed with all her soul for Harald's return; and much work had he to keep peace between the men of North-hold and the followers of his guest, which latter the servants treated with such scant courtesy that they almost lived apart—two factions under one roof.

The days went on; there was no sign of the absent cousins, no further excuse for putting off the wedding feast, and so one sunny morning miserable Gunhild woke to find that it was her marriage-day, and that before night she would be aboard the *Hawk* and leaving her home perhaps for ever, united to a man she loathed.

Very bitter were her thoughts as her maid Iduna dressed her for the day and combed her long, luxuriant golden locks and put the silver shoes upon her feet and bade her carry a cheerful face for her own sake; and heavy as a band of lead and hateful as a slave's fetters felt the golden hoop set with diamonds that Turgrimm had brought for her to wear upon her queenly head in honour of the event of becoming his bride.

Sad and silent Gunhild went down to the feast, and melancholy sat the invited guests round the tables, while Turgrimm ate and drank with boisterous mirth and cracked coarse jokes at which only himself and his men laughed, and Bjorne hung his head even while thinking of his future possessions, and Editha and Freyda sat together, disdainful of the scene. From the first feast the company were to adjourn to the marriage-room for the nuptials to be performed, and Gunhild dreaded the rising from the table, and hoped that the meal would be well prolonged.

"If Harald would only return!" she cried out to herself in the anguish of her soul. "If Harald would only return—if, indeed, he will ever return!"

Turgrimm, whose hateful presence was near her, heard the stifled cry which she could not suppress, and turned to her with a brimming beaker uplifted to his lips.

"Harald, my pretty one, will never return, for he must be under the sea by this, or he would be here! Drink, sweet one, to his good fortune in Odin's Hall!"

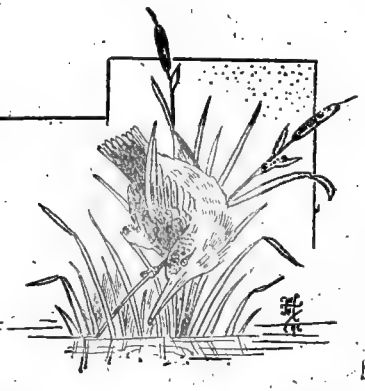
Not an atom of the keen sting of the sarcastic words of the half-drunken Viking escaped Gunhild, and with a sudden access of anger and disgust, she seized the cup nearest to her hand and dashed the contents in his leering face.

With a wild oath the amazed Turgrimm rose spluttering to his feet, and at that instant the great oaken door was flung wide open, and a man strode into the hushed room.

(To be continued.)

Digitized by Google

THE FLOWERED PLATE.



I STILL remember well a horrible story of the invasion which my nurse used to tell me when I was a child.

It was of the first German invasion, in 1814.

My nurse's grandmother was a poor old woman who lived in a cabin in the middle of a forest, somewhere near La Fère. This charming person was quite toothless, covered with innumerable wrinkles, and as withered and yellow as an old poplar. The country folk were ignorant of her exact age. Her husband had been a soldier in the Guards, and if in a gay mood, she would willingly, when out gathering wood, tell many a tale of the old days, when the Duke of Orleans was Regent.

Marianne was sixty-five years old, at least. Her husband had been dead for many years; he was killed, she said, at Valmy. Her only daughter was in service in the town, and she lived quite alone in her cabin, subsisting wretchedly from day to day upon such stray pickings as she could steal from under the bushes when the gamekeepers' backs were turned.

One day there was great excitement in the village near Marianne's home. The woodmen stood about all the day long, open-mouthed, with their hatchets idle in their hands, watching the retreating remnant of the French army pass through the village. There were the old grenadiers, with drooping moustachios, soiled, torn uniforms, and ragged gaiters; there were the artillerymen, with their caps drawn down over their ears; their horses were dragging along painfully the empty, dull-rumbling waggons. The gallant cuirassiers stooped and drooped upon their steeds, and many a dent could be detected in their armour. All these passed like a whirlwind, pell-mell. It was a melancholy sight.

On the following morning at daybreak, some peasants knocked at Marianne's door.

"Quick, Marianne! be quick!" cried they; "let us save ourselves; the Uhlans are coming!"

"The Uhlans cannot harm me, my poor friends," replied Marianne, "for I have nothing to lose."

So Marianne remained alone in the forest. She went out, as usual, into the woods, returned with her apron full of dry branches, and proceeded to set about her little bit of cooking. She began by unhooking her large pot, which she placed upon the fire in preparation for her evening meal.

The old woman had not spoken the exact truth in asserting that she had nothing to lose. The only plate she possessed was a very beautiful specimen of delf ware, patterned with blue flowers. This plate was the only one of its kind in all the forest land, and it had been the cherished ornament of the cabin for the last fifteen years. Marianne prized it above everything else.

* * * * *

Two hours later, the foremost scouts of the enemy made their appearance. There was the thud of horses' feet, the scrunch of dead leaves, the sound of breaking branches; finally, a violent banging upon the door of the tiny, tumble-down cottage.

A German officer stood there, covered with dust. His epaulettes were concealed beneath a large cloak.

"Hallo!" said he, in French, "you do not appear to be particularly rich here. But I suppose that you can find a man something to eat?"

"Indeed, monsieur," replied the woman, "I have nothing. If you ask but a little, it is yet too much. I have nothing—nothing at all!"

"You lie!" said the officer roughly. "Why is that pot upon the fire?"

"I was going to make a little broth, monsieur."

"Very good. Make your broth; it will do very well for Hermann! Take in this man, and feed him for me; give him your broth, bread, and bacon. We will return this way to-morrow."

Hermann fastened his horse to a tree, and the rest of the troop disappeared in the direction of the town, in search of wealthier prey.

The Uhlan strode with heavy tread into the cabin, and by means of expressive gestures demanded food. He was hungry, for His Majesty's soldiers did not dine every day.

Marianne brought out all her table-vessels; a hunting-cup which had belonged to her husband, a wooden bowl, a cracked glass, and the famous flowered plate.

Hermann demanded food, and because the broth was not yet quite ready, he flew into a terrible passion; he stormed and fumed, broke up the chairs, smashed the glass, and buried his knife up to the handle in the table of white wood.

Meanwhile, the old woman, trembling in every limb, and with tightly set jaws (teeth she had none!) was stirring with a wooden spoon the contents of her pot, which was droning a monotonous song over the fire of vine-branches.

All the time that she was doing this, and attending to her pot, in which great bubbles were now forming upon the surface of the liquid, she kept her eye upon the blue plate—her precious, flowered plate—which she momentarily expected to see shattered and added to the Prussian's hecatomb.

Digitized by Google

In order to avert this disaster, she laid upon the plate a small piece of bacon and a roll of bread. Hermann attacked these viands ferociously. He ate and ate; until the bread had vanished, and the bacon was but a dream. Yet the Uhlan hungered still. With a gesture of demand, he fixed his eyes upon the pot still singing upon the fire.

The woman again put a little bread and a small piece of bacon—all of the latter that remained to her—upon the blue plate. Then she went softly, softly, back to her pot.

With a satisfied air, she gave her spoon one more turn. The broth was boiling furiously; enormous bubbles were dancing madly all over its surface.

It was a great exertion to lift off the great pot. It took all Marianne's strength, all her care, to carry it steadily in her two hands. The Uhlan was still engrossed in the consumption of the bread and bacon, although, doubtless, enjoying also the appetising odour wafted from the uncovered pot behind him, in which the broth was murmuring its last strains.

The old woman hobbled towards her unwelcome guest, taking extreme care to make no sound, and bearing with great difficulty the full pot. Painfully she lifted it behind the man's head. Hermann, utterly unconscious of her proximity and his own peril, continued his meal. Then, with one supreme effort, she turned the pot upside down over his head, and the boiling liquid flowed all over him.

He fell, his whole body horribly scalded, his head still completely covered by the great pot.

Old Marianne, locking the door of her cabin behind her, went forth calmly into the forest.

That is how my nurse's grandmother saved her flowered plate.

LE VIER.

Lorry, Mamie, and I.

LORRY is a dog, Mamie is the sweetest creature that ever trod on earth, and I am I.

I first met Mamie at a crowded ballroom, and sat out a delightful dance with her. I am a very nervous man, and every word that Mamie said caused my heart to jump; nevertheless, just as her next partner was coming up to claim her, I managed to ask her if she would allow me to visit her.

"Yes," she called back over her shoulder, "No. 3. And—come soon."

I saw her partner turn round and look at me, and the expression on his face wasn't pleasant. I couldn't bear to see Mamie dancing with anyone else, and so I went away.

A day or two later I was walking about in the vicinity of No. 3. I had passed and repassed the house many times, and was suffering from nervous excitement. My heart was fluttering within me, and my feet almost refused to carry me. At last I summoned up my fast oozing courage, sprang up the massive steps with the same feelings as one who visits the dentist, and rang at the bell. There, it was done. There was no chance of escape; already the butler was at the door.

Was Mamma at home? No, she was out. Was Mamie at home? Yes, she was. Er, oh, yes, and before I had time to say a word I found the door had closed behind me.

There was no possible escape, for already we were at the drawing-room door. A moment later the butler came back again. Mamie would be in in a few minutes; would I take a chair?

I looked round for the most effective seat for me to sit in. Yes, this will do nicely; I will be in this position when she comes in. What had I better be doing though? An album of photographs; nothing could be better. I began turning over the leaves, and wondering if I should come across Mamma. Good gracious, supposing that this fat old lady was she! If Mamie was going to grow up like that!

I suddenly began to wonder whether my tie was straight; should I have time to steal over to the looking glass and have an inspection? I lay down the book and creep across the room. Yes, everything is irreproachable. Not a hair on my head is rough, my frock coat is perfect—stay! A speck of dust on the sleeve. I take my handkerchief and carefully remove it. Then I have to arrange my handkerchief again in my pocket.

All this takes time, and before I am able to get back to my chair again, I hear a voice outside; a silvery voice, evidently speaking to a dog.

"Now, Lorry, be a good boy. Whatever happens don't bark or snap. *Lorry*, come back, sir."

Before I have fairly had time to reach my chair again, and hurriedly take up my book (my position must have looked most affected) the door opens, and a dog bounds in—an absurd little toy dog, its ridiculous body covered with long hair, with only two twinkling eyes to be seen.

In two bounds the animal is on me; "Lorry" as Mamie calls him. He springs on to my photo album, swarms all over me, rumples my hair, and in a twinkling is back again to his mistress.

"*Lorry*, come back, sir! How *dare* you!" and in another minute I am holding Mamie's hand. She is a sweet little piece of womanhood; so rosy, and soft, and childlike.

"I have never known him do such a thing as that before," she explains. "He is usually so naughty, and snaps and bites at strangers. It shows you must be very fond of dogs—and very good-tempered." She drops her eyes as she says this and a maidenly blush steals over her face. It matches some red flowers she's wearing in her belt.

I wonder where she got those roses from. I wonder if any other fellow gave them to her. Presently I ask her this.

"They came out of the garden," she replies. "Would you like to come and see them?"

She leads the way out of the low window, and across the lawn, on to the rose beds.

"Look. That red bud would just suit your buttonhole," and she reaches over to pick it.

Digitized by Google

"Oh!" she cries suddenly, "its thorns have caught my sleeve. *Do* release me!"

She is wearing some kind of lace frill which is hanging down over her hands. I pretend to be unentangling this, but really pin it on to two more thorns, and hold her captive. What a soft little hand it seems, as it touches my great strong ones! I whisper something into her ear, and once more her blush matches the rose; then I release her hand, and we go back to the house again, forgetting all about my buttonhole.

Mamie goes off to hunt for Mamma. I am about to sit effectively down in my chair again, when I find the dog, Lorry, has taken my seat. Now's my chance.

"I will teach you to jump upon me again, my sweet little thing," I cry, and look round for my stick. Stick and hat have disappeared, but something shining under the sofa catches my eye. It's my new Gibus, completely ruined. Under another chair I see the nob of my stick.

I seize my stick, and catch the dog, and draw him to my chair. I am about to give him the soundest flogging he ever received when the door opens, and Mamie came in.

"See," I cry, "what a playful little dog. He wants me to throw my stick for him."

"Good boy," says Mamie. "Sweet little dog! He *does* seem to be fond of you. Mamma has just gone out," she resumes..

Happy chance! Then I may come again to see her? When? "Let me see. To-day's Tuesday. Say Thursday, at this time."

Thursday. Two whole days! I groan inwardly.

On Wednesday I find myself irresistibly attracted to the street where No. 3 is situated. I wander up and down for a long while, and presently my patience is rewarded. I see Mamie and Lorry coming straight towards me. Lorry sees me at once and in a moment rushes to meet me. A twinkling of the eye, and his muddy paws have rendered me unfit to be seen.

Mamie is very sorry. How fond the dog is of me though. Then she smiles and bows, and is gone. "To-morrow at three," she calls back over her shoulder.

I go to-morrow at three, and meet Mamma, and everything is going satisfactorily.

After this I go a great many times, and gradually my nervousness disappears.

But at last the day comes when I set out for No. 3, quaking as I never quaked before. For hours I wander up and down in front of the house, until the jeers of a street boy drive me in. I spring up the steps and ring the bell without giving myself time to think.

Is Mamma in? No, she's out. Is Mamie in? Yes. I bound up the stairs, and burst into the drawing-room, and then almost faint with fear. Mamie is here already, holding Lorry in her arms, looking so childish and pretty that I am more in love than ever.

"Oh, I am so glad you've come," she cries, "do you know I was just thinking of you. I was really. I was just thinking how nice it would be if I was to give you Lorry. He always seems so fond of you and I thought —if you would take him — *do*, please now; for my sake."

Here was a chance! I should be nothing less than mad if I did not take it. I grew redder and redder, and mumbled beneath my breath. Lorry, surprised at my extraordinary expression, barked sharply.

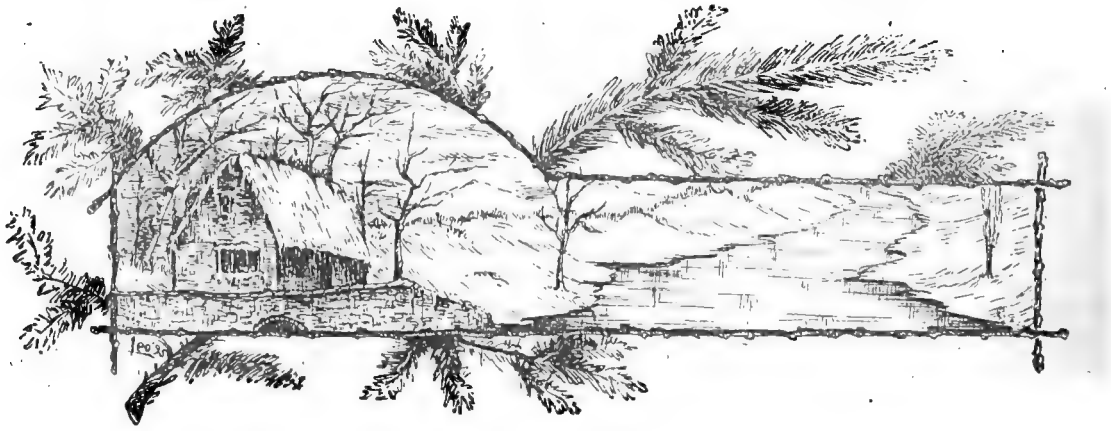
"See" I cried. "Lorry doesn't want us to part. Listen how he barks at the idea." I fell on my knees, and grew redder and redder.

"Mamie, dear, must we three ever part? Couldn't we——"

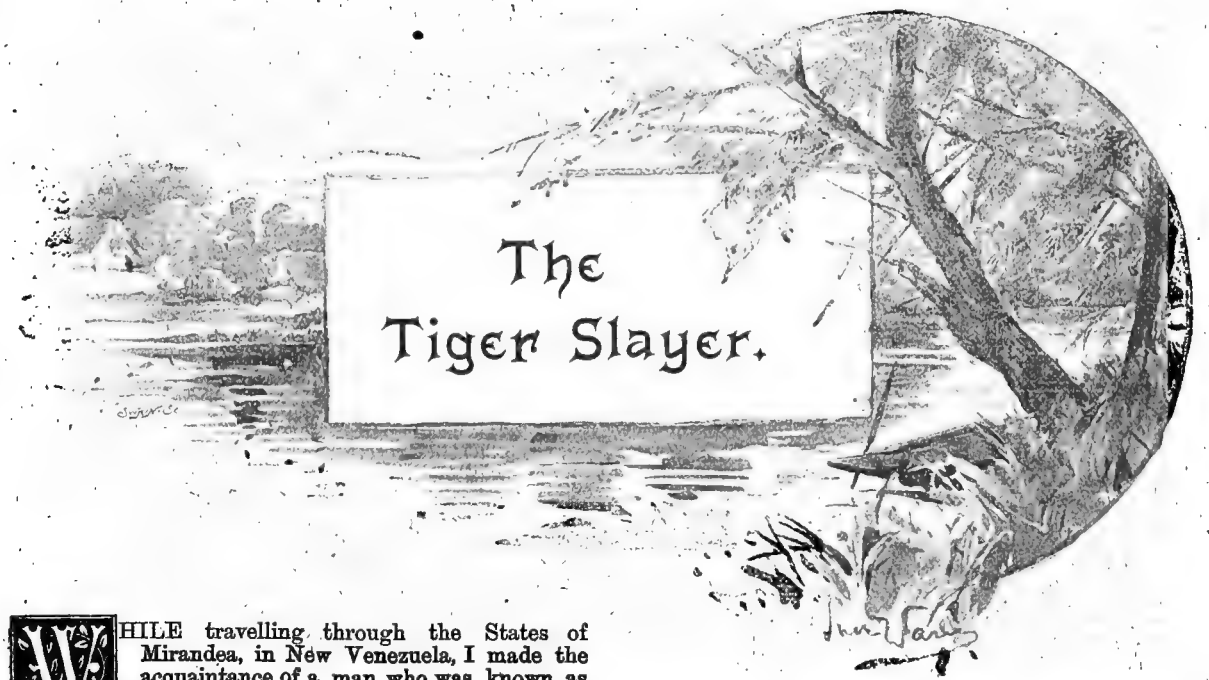
* * * * *

Lorry and Mamie and I have never parted since. I allow Lorry to live because if it hadn't been for him I should never have won my wife. When he sees me now, however, he takes care not to jump on me.

J. Marcus.



Digitized by Google



The Tiger Slayer.

WHILE travelling through the States of Mirandea, in New Venezuela, I made the acquaintance of a man who was known as Manuel the Tiger-hunter, and one day had the opportunity of accompanying him on one of his perilous excursions.

It was about three o'clock in the morning when we reached the mountain which was our destination, and after about half-an-hour's farther walking, my strange companion paused at a turn in the narrow path which we were then pursuing, and I felt rather than saw that the dawn of a new day was close at hand.

There was a strange stir in the air, as though the feeble breath of life had come back to dead, inanimated nature. Over the eastern mountain tops the stars were growing pale. The first faint, grey tinge of dawn was coming, a long way off.

Day advanced slowly. I noted this with surprise, for all the books I had read, which gave a description of dawn in the tropics, had asserted unanimously that day came with a bound, out of the blackness of the night.

Perhaps the writers of these descriptions had waited until the sun had already reddened the eastern sky before watching for the dawn, for from the time when I noticed the first faint, grey streaks in the sky, until the sun was actually shining on the mountain tops, fully an hour elapsed.

I could have remained watching the coming day for another hour, at least, but as soon as it was light enough to see surrounding objects, Manuel carefully chose a spot which I could occupy during the impending gladiatorial contest.

The coign of vantage was the peak of high rock, which almost overhung the path which he eventually chose, and with some difficulty climbed to the top of it.

Nature, I thought, must have intended the rock for some such purpose as this, for it gave an unobstructed view of the path for some distance on each side, and I could hardly have missed seeing any animal walking upon it, for a considerable distance.

There was plenty of evidence, too, that the advantage of this peak, as a look-out station, had been appreciated and used by other hunters than man. Indications showed that wild beasts, presumably tigers, had crouched there in wait for unsuspecting prey.

This discovery did not fail to give me a mild sensation. I might be reasonably safe from the attack of a tiger in the path below; but I hesitated, when I speculated upon the consequences likely to ensue if a tiger came up, and found me occupying his own private and particular look-out.

As soon as I had comfortably concealed myself behind the rock, although in a position that permitted me to keep careful watch upon the exposed parts of the path, Manuel disappeared. He was standing behind the base of a rock one moment, and the very next instant he had vanished. He must have gone like a serpent, for I heard no sound.

Then I was alone on a tiger's favourite resort in an uninhabited South American forest. It was hardly a pleasant sensation, especially as my revolver seemed to be, as doubtless it was, a very inadequate weapon. A suspicion might have crossed my mind that Manuel had left me there as a bait for a tiger, but I would not give it a moment's credence.

There were noises on the mountain-side by this time, and some of them so distinct that I could distinguish them. Small animals were scampering about in the undergrowth, and birds were calling in the trees. A commotion among the birds down the path attracted my attention, and I wondered if a tiger had stirred them up, or if Manuel had strayed as far away as that.

A few moments later there was another commotion in the distance on the other side of me, but I gave little heed to it. On the right-hand side of the path, a small creature, something like a woodchuck, stopped short in his leisurely morning walk, and sniffed suspiciously at the air. I was to leeward of him in the light breeze that had sprung up, and so he could not have scented me. He sniffed a moment in the direction of the first

Digitized by Google

disturbance, and then suddenly dived headlong into the undergrowth.

Assuredly there was something off to windward that he was afraid of.

The disturbance ceased after a time, and then the mountain side was still again.

Looking down over the rock a few moments later, I found Manuel gazing up at me. He pointed to the left in the direction of the second disturbance and again disappeared. It is probable that on this occasion he hid himself in the undergrowth alongside of the path.

I gave my undivided attention to the distant fluttering of birds. It was a curious sort of circus that the birds were having. The little things circled about in the tops of the trees and screamed shrilly one to the other. It might have been a huge snake that frightened and fascinated them, or it might have been a tiger. Manuel knew, in all probability, but it made no sign.

The disturbance came a little nearer, but it seemed to me that it moved very slowly. If a tiger were coming along the path he should, in my opinion, have made better time.

I calmed my impatience by assuring myself that if it were a tiger he would come fast enough when he once got wind of me.

It was a long half hour of suspense before the disturbance came within reasonable distance. Before half of that time had passed I was satisfied that something very objectionable to birds was walking leisurely along the path, and perhaps stopping now and then in hope of surprising one of the birds unawares.

At length the thing was just beyond the turn in the path. In a moment or two I should see what it was.

Then I became conscious that Manuel was standing in the path, with a short spear held in a horizontal position over his shoulder. This was interesting, and at the same time very suggestive.

I concentrated my entire nervous system in an intense contemplation of the turn in the path. The suspense was awful.

Ah! what was that? A striped and spotted animal suddenly stood out in the open. His tail swung slowly from side to side, and his smooth coat moved nervously with some passing emotion. It was the tiger of the South American forests. He had stopped with one foot advanced, and with his head in the attitude of attention. He had seen something in the path before him. It was Manuel, who was standing as immovable as the rock beside him.

It was a beautiful beast, all silk and softness and graceful curves. I thought it was a pity that so beautiful a thing should be hunted to death, but at the same time I reflected that this wonderfully beautiful exterior covered a nature that was the incarnation of ferocity.

I do not know how long Manuel and the tiger faced each other there in the narrow path like gladiators.

It seemed a very long time.

This was the test.

The tiger waited instinctively to see the strange thing before him turn and run away as everything else in the forest invariably did, but greatly to his surprise the thing stood its ground like an immovable rock. The tiger was king of the forest, and he knew it, and when he had made up his mind that this thing was not going to run, he came forward slowly to investigate. This was courage even in a wild brute, and I respected him for it. I doubt if the lion or the tiger of India has this unshakable nerve.

I looked at Manuel as the tiger came slowly and cautiously along the path. He stood like a bronze statue with his spear held over his right shoulder. Not so much as an eyelid moved.

I confess that during this trying time I was a bit nervous. This was a new way of hunting to me, and a decided novelty in the actions of a wild beast which had not been attacked. I should expect an attack from a grizzly bear after it had been wounded, but assuredly the bear would not take the aggressive as this lithe and beautiful beast was doing. I will acknowledge that my heart thumped against my blue flannel shirt so hard that I was afraid that the noise would attract the attention of the tiger.

Slowly came the tiger; like a rock stood Manuel. It looked as though the case had been reversed, and that the tiger, instead of the half-breed, was the hunter.

At length the tiger was within touching distance of the man.

He looked the bronze figure over from head to foot, and then thrust forward his head and sniffed at the man's feet. Back the great beast sprang like a steel spring. The figure was flesh and blood.

The tiger's tail twitched from side to side like a flail; the great jaws opened with a snarl. Quickly the beast measured his distance and crouched with quivering sinews for a spring. Such calm courage was grand beyond all description. It was matched only by the steadfast nerve of the man.

Now came the crisis.

I could see the huge muscles heaving under the striped skin. In another second the tiger would leap upon his prey.

In that instant the hunter made a motion with his left arm as quick as light itself. He tore the handkerchief from his neck and thrust it full in the tiger's face. Up went the tiger's head in a quiver of electrical amazement. Then the hunter's poised right arm shot forward with incredible force, and the spear buried itself half-way to the handle in the tiger's neck.

Ah, it was nobly done; and throughout it all, from the beginning until the wonderful ending, the hunter's nerve never faltered so much as by the hair's breadth. Before I could catch my breath, and swallow the lumps of apprehension that had risen unbidden in my throat, the fierce beast was dead in the path.

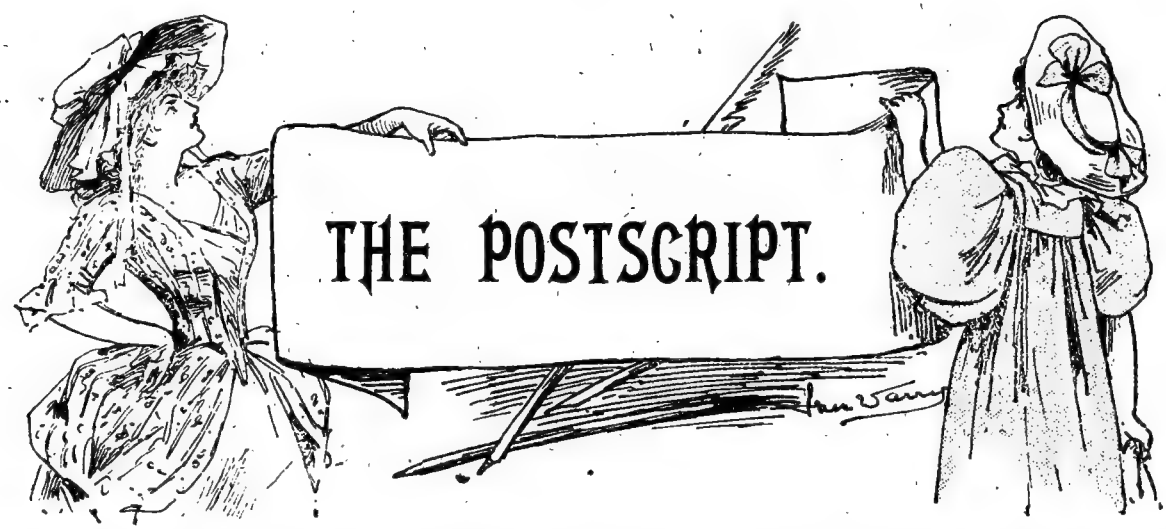
I scrambled down from the rock, and stood beside the dead forest king. Manuel picked up his handkerchief and pulled out his spear. There was a faint suggestion of a smile about his impassive face.

"Does the Señor Inglesi believe?" he asked.

"He does," I answered, and I gave him my hand in that universal brotherhood of which civilisation can never efface. By the side of that dead tiger the savage and the son of civilisation were on the one common level of man. There could be no difference.

Arnold Rees.

Digitized by Google



THE POSTSCRIPT.

Mlle. Pauline de Glanes had finished her shopping in the Rue Hausman, and was walking slowly up the shady side of the street, in the direction of her aunt's house in the Champs Elysées—her home for the next two months—when she became vaguely conscious that someone—a man—was following her.

Coming out of the fashionable photographer's further down the street, where she had gone to arrange for a sitting, she had narrowly escaped from colliding with a frock-coated, shiny-hatted, curly-haired young gentleman. In the short interval occupied by their mutual apologies she had had time to notice first that the boy—for he was really little more—had a great deal more than his share of good looks, and secondly, that he was regarding her with undisguised admiration.

Then she had gone on up the street, with an unmistakable blush on her cheeks, and a palpable quickening of the pulse beneath her slender wrist. She walked with the long graceful swing which is as common among the women of the stage as it is rare elsewhere. Her skirt, trimmed elaborately, but in perfect taste, seemed to move of itself in unison with her limbs, rather than be carried along with them. From the roses in the big hat which crowned her shapely head, to the pointed toes of her little morocco leather shoes she looked as charming as you could wish, and by the time she had reached No. 58, in the avenue, at least half-a-dozen men had fallen hopelessly in love with her.

As she stooped to put her key in the door she happened to glance down the avenue. The boy, whose appearance had been so forcibly impressed on her in the Rue Hausman, was standing at the corner gazing intently at her. She blushed violently and fumbled energetically at the key, (which, as luck would have it, seemed to have jammed), looked up again, impelled by some irresistible attraction, and caught the boy's gaze full, blushed still more, wrenched furiously at the key, and at last, with a desperate effort, turned it and disappeared within.

The moment the door closed behind her the boy advanced rapidly down the street, picked up the envelope which, unnoticed by her, had dropped from her pocket when she took out the key, carefully scrutinised the address, smiled, put the envelope into his breast pocket, and with a glance up at the windows of the house as if to impress it on his memory, lounged off down the street humming quietly to himself the chorus of the latest popular *chanson*.

* * * * *

"It's shameful! What sort of woman does he think I am? Oh, how I hate men!" and Pauline de Glanes' little French shoes beat a contemptuous tattoo on her bedroom carpet, and her little hands doubled up into dainty fists, suggesting that she would like to enter into violent physical warfare with the whole of the other sex then and there.

The innocent cause of this outburst lay, sublimely unconscious of the storm it had aroused, on her lap, the creamiest and roughest of creamy rough envelopes, addressed in a straggling masculine hand, with a corresponding sheet of note-paper protruding. Pauline pulled the letter out again, and half pouting, half crying, read it over for the sixth or seventh time. It was dated from the Club Olympique, and ran as follows:

Dear Mlle. de Glanes,—Pardon the liberty which I, a perfect stranger, take in addressing you. Your name and address I discovered from the envelope you dropped. The only excuse I have to offer—if it be an excuse—is that I cannot help it. The moment I saw you on the Rue Hausman I felt that, come what might, I would try to make your acquaintance. Ah! Mademoiselle, you know not how lovely you are. I know that by addressing you like this, I run the risk of forfeiting your esteem and perhaps losing sight of you for ever. But I cannot help it; I must take my chance Oh, pardon the presumption, but can you find it in your heart to permit me to call on you? Of course, I know that I have never been formally introduced to you, but I know if you will let me call we shall be sure to find that we have lots of mutual acquaintances who can arrange a proper introduction.

Yours in despair,
Andre de Saint Aydredon.

Pauline's tattoo on the carpet continued during the reading of the letter, and once or twice a tear fell and blurred the words.

When she came to the boyish sprawling signature at the end she got up from her chair and began to walk hurriedly up and down the room.

"It's abominable," she murmured, "to be insulted like that, abominable! And he was a gentlemanly-looking boy, too. Couldn't he see I was a lady? I am sure"—she went over to the glass, and gazed anxiously into it—"no; I am sure I don't look like that sort of woman—no, not a bit. Write to him? Yes, I will, and at once, too, and tell him what I think."

Digitized by Google

She sat down at the little escritoire and began:

Avenue Champs Elysées, May, 1894.

Sir,—Your letter has surprised me exceedingly. I am not in the habit of receiving such insulting——

She paused for a word, resting her elbows on the table and her chin on her hands. A photograph of a man—her brother—stood on the escritoire in front of her. She had always considered him good looking. Now, somehow, unconsciously, she began to compare him with the man to whom she was writing—to the latter's decided advantage. After all, she thought, Olivier was really nothing much to look at.

She took the frame up and scrutinised the picture closely. Now she came to consider matters critically, Olivier was not very far removed from absolute plainness. His nose was really almost a snub, his eyes too small, the forehead, the squareness of which she had once thought an attraction, seemed to have become obtrusively aggressive. It looked as if it were trying to push its way out of the picture. And the hair was uncompromisingly straight and flat. It was ridiculous! Men with hair like that ought to be made to curl it, like the girls did. Curly hair was so much prettier. Like, for instance——

A faint pink painted her cheeks. She took up her pen and set to work at the letter again.

Sir,—Your letter has surprised me exceedingly. I am not in the habit of receiving such insulting communications. I only take notice of yours at all because——

After all, why was she writing at all? Wouldn't it be far better to take no notice? Wouldn't—No, she would write, just to let him know that that sort of thing might be done to a chorus-girl—not to her, or any woman of her sort. It should be a lesson to him for the future. There was no reason why a man should treat a woman like that just because he had money—every one in Paris knew the St. Ayredons, and the old Baron was reputed a millionaire many times over. Yes, he certainly was handsome, too, this young aristocrat. How well he looked in his frock coat and glossy hat! It was all very well to run down men's clothes, but they suited some men to perfection. And good-looking young men were not too plentiful.

He had money, too. How lucky some people were to be sure. She must really get her father to raise her allowance. As it was, she was always in debt. Only that morning, Sylvestine had sent in her bill for the third time, with a rude little note to the effect that it was very much overdue and must really be settled at once. And there was that delicious little pony Lablache wanted her to buy. It certainly was dirt cheap at 1,000 francs. But, of course, cheap or not, it was quite out of the question. Equally, of course, that horrid Gailliard girl would jump at it. Lablache said that she was dying to have it, but he would rather sell it to a lady who knew something about horses—like herself, naturally—if he could. It was hard to be done out of it just for a paltry 1,000 francs. Still there was no help for it and——

Good gracious, six o'clock! She had been half-an-hour over that stupid letter already. It must be finished at once.

She took up her pen again:

I only take notice of yours because it is well you should know that though that sort of thing may do with some women, it won't do for me. For the future you had better confine such attentions to——

Chorus-girls? No! I don't like that. Besides, after all, he's only a boy, and chorus-girls, I know, are awfully expensive. Olivier told me so! Let me see; ah, that's it:

to women who care for that sort of thing. I do not.

Pauline de Glanes.

No, of course I don't!

The letter was duly blotted and an envelope addressed. But instead of folding it up at once, Pauline hesitated a moment, bit the end of her quill pen, took up first paper, then envelope, and put both down again, fidgeted in her chair, rubbed one dainty little foot against the other, and finally her cheeks, ears, and even her neck suffused with blushes, snatched her pen and hurriedly scribbled another line.

It ran thus:

P S.—If after what I have written you dare to call, please don't knock, but ring three times.

Allen Goodman.

A TEN-POUND PRIZE.

(See Opposite Page.)

On the opposite page is a puzzle picture composed of 88 squares. If these squares be rearranged in a certain order they will form a real picture.

We offer a prize of £10 to the first person who sends the correct solution. In order to give readers in all parts of the United Kingdom as equal a chance as possible, none of the solutions received will be opened until Thursday, April 23rd, when all those received will be considered together. In the event of two or more correct solutions being included in one day's post, the prize will be given to the sender of the *neatest* one. Consolation Prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor.

If no correct solution be received on or before Tuesday, April 28th, 1896, the Ten-Pound Prize will be given to the sender of the solution then to hand which is most nearly correct.

Pictures should be packed flat or folded, not rolled, and the outside wrapper must be marked "June."

N.B.—To make the puzzle more difficult some of the squares have been turned upside down, others sideways.

Digitized by Google

The Abode of Ideal Life.

Translated from the Polish.

ONCE, on a bright moonlight night, the wise and mighty Krishna communed with himself and said: "I thought man was the most beautiful of created things, but I am mistaken. I see the lotus-flower bow to the passing breeze. How it surpasses all living creatures in beauty! Its leaves are just closed in the silvery moonlight, and I cannot turn my eyes away from it. Yes, there is nothing like the lily among men," he repeated, sighing.

But a moment later he thought: "Why should not I, who am a god, by the might of my word, create a being which would be to mankind what the lotus is among the flowers? So be it then for the delight of humanity and of the earth. Lotus flower, be transformed into a maiden and stand before me."

The waves rippled softly as the beating of swallows' wings, the night became clearer, the moon shone deeper, the night-song of the thrush rose higher, and suddenly died away. And it was as Krishna had commanded. Before him stood the lotus-flower in human form. The god himself was startled.

"Thou wert the flower of the waters," said he; "be henceforth the flower of my thoughts, and speak."

And the maiden began to whisper, softly as the murmur of white lotus-leaves kissed by the summer airs: "Lord, thou has transformed me into a living creature; where wilt thou that I dwell? Remember, Lord, that when I was a flower I trembled, and closed my leaves at every breath of wind. I was smitten with fear, Lord, at the rain and the storm, the thunder and the lightning; yes, I was even overcome with fear of the scorching rays of the sun. Thou commandest me to become a living, breathing lotus-flower. I have, consequently, retained my former nature, and now, Lord, I am troubled at the earth and at everything that lives upon it. Where wilt thou, then, that I make my abode?"

Krishna lifted his serene eyes to the stars, meditated a while, and asked: "Wouldst thou live on the mountains' peaks?"

"There is frost and snow; I am afraid, Lord."

"Well, then, I will build a palace of crystal for thee on the ocean floor."

"In the depths of the water there glide serpents and horrible monsters. O, Lord, I am afraid!"

"Wilt thou, then, dwell on the boundless prairie?"

"O, Lord, the prairie is ravaged with thunder and the whirlwind as with the tramp of wild herds!"

"How, then, shall I provide for thee, thou flower that hast become flesh? Ah, in the caves of Ellora there live holy hermits. Wilt thou, retired from the world, make thy dwelling in the caves?"

"There rules the darkness, Lord. I am afraid!"

Then Krishna sat him down upon a stone and leant his head upon his hand. The maiden stood before him, trembling, and quaking. At that moment the fiery crimson of dawn glowed in the east; the waves of ocean, the palm-trees, and the bamboos glistened with gold. The rosy-winged flamingoes, the blue cranes, and the white swans in the waters joined their notes in chorus with the birds in the jungle, and immediately was heard the clang of harp-strings extended upon a shell of pearl, and the words of a song in human voice.

Then Krishna aroused himself from his dream and said: "The poet Walmiki greets the rising sun."

A little later the purple veil of dawn was withdrawn from the flower-decked creepers, and Walmiki appeared by the lake. At sight of the transformed lotus-flower he ceased to play, the pearly instrument slipped softly from his fingers to earth, his hands dropped to his sides, and he stood as speechless as though Krishna had transformed him into a tree.

And the god was pleased at this admiration of his handiwork, and said: "Wake, Walmiki, and speak."

And Walmiki spoke: "I love." This was the only word he could recall, the only word to which he could give expression.

Krishna's countenance glowed suddenly. "Wondrous maiden," he said: "I have found a place fit for thee. Dwell in the poet's heart."

And Walmiki repeated: "I love."

The will of the mighty Krishna, the Divine will, drew the maiden to the poet's heart. At the god's behest also the heart of Walmiki became transparent as glass. Glad as a summer day, peaceful as a wave of the Ganges, advanced the maiden to her allotted place; but suddenly, as she looked deeper into Walmiki's heart, her countenance paled, and fear agitated her with its icy breath. Krishna was startled.

"Sentient flower," he asked, "art thou afraid even of the heart of the poet?"

"Lord," answered the maiden, "what sort of a dwelling place is this that thou hast appointed me? Here in this one heart I behold snowy mountain peaks and ocean depths peopled with terrible creatures; and here, too, the prairie with its whirlwind and storm; here, too, the dark caves of Ellora; hence I am again afraid, oh Lord!"

But the good and wise Krishna said: "Calm thyself sentient flower. If in Walmiki's heart there are solitary snowfields, be thou the breath of spring to melt them. If there are ocean depths in his heart, be thou the pearl of those waters. Are there prairie wastes, then sow them with the flowers of happiness, and if thou findest there dark caves as of Ellora, so be thou in this darkness as a ray of sunlight."

And Walmiki, who had meanwhile recovered his speech, added: "And be blessed!"

Digitized by Google

The Great Middlewick Bank Robbery.

CHAPTER XIII.

This Beats Anything I've ever Come Across.

Despite Jack Burton's common sense, and in the face of his strong fight against it, a dreadful suspicion began taking shape in his mind. It was that Bobby Roberts was either innocent of the strange disappearance of Alfred Taylor, or, at the most, was but a *particeps criminis* therein. In other words, Frank Rutherford, the suspected book-keeper of the bank, was the guilty person.

This at first was so violent a supposition that Burton dismissed it with a feeling of self-scorn that he should have allowed it to enter his mind. But it came again and again until it secured an abiding-place in his brain, and he was compelled to think it over in all its aspects.

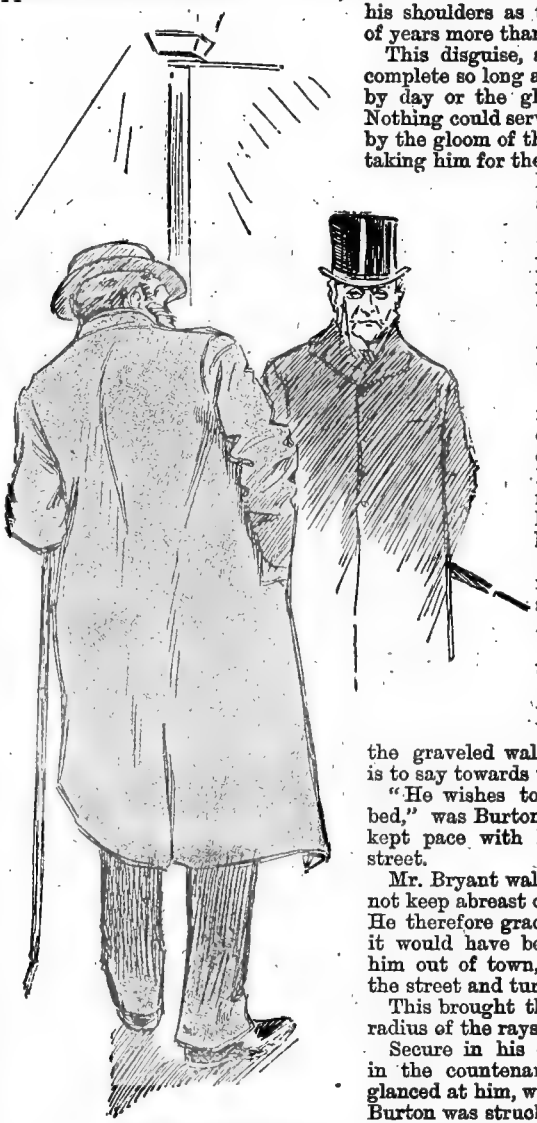
There were a hundred facts against it and only a few in its favour, but these few outweighed all the others.

Let a man in Jack Burton's position once start upon a line of speculation, and the labyrinth becomes intricate, involved and endless, with the result that all is a hopeless tangle beyond his power to unravel.

It is useless to follow the theories which became a veritable torment to him; we have only to trace actions and their results.

Now that Roberts had withdrawn, for the time at least, Burton decided to give attention to Mr. Rutherford. He had learned from Taylor of the singular conduct of the young man on the night that Mr. Bryant visited Burton, when the latter was serving as watchman in the bank. In what manner Rutherford and Roberts could be jointly concerned in the abduction of Taylor passed comprehension, but, as has been said, the suspicion that such was the case now almost amounted to a certainty.

Burton was badly in need of sleep. He had had little slumber for the past forty-eight hours. It was foolish to presume too far upon his powers of endurance. He therefore flung himself on his bed, and, with that fortunate gift which a few men possess, sank into a rest that was unbroken until night had come. Upon awaking he descended to the dining-room, where a good meal completely refreshed him.



Burton looked up in the countenance of the banker.

From the hotel he went straight to the cottage of the old couple with whom he had lodged while serving as watchman at the Middlewick Bank. So well known had he become in the little country town because of his connection with the arrest of the burglars that a complete change of clothing was necessary to avoid recognition.

This completed, he sauntered to the outskirts of the town, beyond the further house. There, when certain that no one saw him, he made a still greater change in his personal appearance. He fastened a pair of bushy whiskers over his beard, carried a cane and walked with a slight limp, depressing his shoulders as though weighed down by a score of years more than belonged to him.

This disguise, as has already been stated, was complete so long as it was not subjected to scrutiny by day or the glare of a strong artificial light. Nothing could serve his purpose better when helped by the gloom of the street. No fear now of anyone taking him for the new watchman who had resigned his situation, as may be said, amid a blaze of triumph.

It was between nine and ten when Burton strolled past Frank Rutherford's home. He had no reason to expect anything in the way of discovery.

A dim light was burning in the upper room, which he had learned belonged to the young man.

"He is out and not likely to return for some time," was the conclusion of the watcher, who continued his stroll towards Mr. Bryant's residence, that being the most likely spot to find the book-keeper in case he wished to meet him.

A bright light in the sitting-room of the banker's house showed that in all probability Burton's surmise was correct.

That being so, what good could the knowledge do him?

But when opposite the house the front door opened, and the bank manager himself came down the graveled walk and turned to the right, that is to say towards the open country.

"He wishes to take a stroll before going to bed," was Burton's conclusion, as he turned and kept pace with him on the other side of the street.

Mr. Bryant walked slowly, so that Burton could not keep abreast of him without attracting notice. He therefore gradually walked on ahead; and, as it would have been still more suspicious to follow him out of town, the limping individual crossed the street and turned back over his own route.

This brought the couple face to face within the radius of the rays of the street lamp.

Secure in his own disguise, Burton looked up in the countenance of the banker, who merely glanced at him, with a neighbourly nod of his head. Burton was struck by the expression of anguish on the other's face. He seemed ready to sink under the weight of some overwhelming sorrow.

Digitized by Google

"Poor man! The blow hurts him more than any of his friends suspect. Can it be he has an inkling of the truth? Does he see that the happiness, and life itself, of his favourite niece is wrapped up in this hateful mystery? Does he know that when the solution comes it means disgrace worse than death?"

Deep resentment towards Rutherford took possession of

Peered anxiously across the way.

Burton as these thoughts flashed through his mind. That any man worthy of the man who had been accepted as a trusted friend and as the suitor of the young lady's hand should have behaved as the young book-keeper had, made him the more anxious to bring his guilt home to him. If he could have seen his way open to punish him without making the innocent suffer he would eagerly have done so. But, alas! in this life it is the innocent who suffer more than the guilty.

At the next corner, Burton looked round. If Mr. Bryant had intended taking a country stroll, he had now evidently changed his mind. He was standing motionless, as though undecided what to do. Burton slackened his pace as much as he thought prudent, but again glancing round he saw that the old man was as immovable as the lamp-post beside him.

Yielding to a feeling of uneasiness, Burton slipped across the street, intending to return and keep an eye on the banker. It might be he contemplated doing violence to himself.

So absorbed had he been in watching Mr. Bryant that it was not until he started crossing the road that Burton noticed that another person was doing what he had in view. A man was coming from the direction of the banker's house, and walking so slowly that it was clear that his interest was centred in the old gentleman.

Had Burton observed him before leaving the pavement, he would have kept on his own side of the road, but having made the move he thought it best not to turn back. Thus before he had taken many more steps he was face to face with the newcomer, whom, despite the gloom, he recognised as Frank Rutherford, the book-keeper of the bank.

Rutherford hardly noticed the limping man with the cane, but peered anxiously across the way at the dimly outlined figure in the distance. It was easy for Burton to keep the younger man in view, as, but a few yards further on, he paused evidently afraid of attracting the banker's attention.

That was the tableau—the old man, silent, thoughtful, motionless beneath the glare of the lamp; the younger, still as a statue in the gloom, dimly seeing and yet intently watching the other.

Burton added himself to the scene by halting also, but at such a distance that he would not have been able to notice Rutherford had he not done so before increasing the space between them.

This distribution of character brought about another result; Burton had stopped almost in front of Mr. Bryant's house, so that by shifting his gaze he was given a good view of that building.

The light was still burning in the drawing-room, and in the gloom of the verandah he made out the figure of a young lady, whose interest doubtless centred in the two persons who had left the house but a few minutes before.

The interpretation of the whole scene could not have been plainer.

The banker, for some reason, had left his home at a later hour than usual. It might have been for a simple stroll, and it might mean much more. His niece and her lover were startled by his action, and the latter had set out to note the movements of the elder. That was what he was doing, while she, in her anxiety, could not remain indoors until the return of the watcher.

There was a flicker under the distant lamp, and for a moment the figure of the banker was revealed, then lost to sight again in the shadows. He had resumed his walk, but instead of going towards the country he was returning home.

Hardly had he started when Rutherford imitated him. Burton was only a second or two later in doing the same, so that Mr. Bryant at the further end of the line controlled the movements of the trio.

A brief walk brought the young man opposite the house he had left only a short while before. He did not cross and re-enter, as Burton expected him to do, but coughed vigorously. Immediately Miss Crossland turned and disappeared through the French windows. She understood the signal to mean that her uncle was coming back.

Burton did not think it wise to hasten his pace. He had acted his part so well that no suspicion was directed towards him. Thus it was that he had not gone far when Rutherford passed him at a sharp walk. Burton hastened his steps slightly, but so rapidly was the young man walking that he was soon out of sight.

"There's no need for me to hurry, for he's going home to bed. Still, I will give him a good-night look as I pass the house," was the watcher's conclusion.

As he turned the corner Burton observed that the light in the book-keeper's room was burning brightly, proof that he had returned and was doubtless preparing to retire. Dropping back to his slow pace, the late watchman sauntered on, intending to pass the little cottage. It was his intention to halt opposite it and wait until the light in the upper storey was extinguished.

To his astonishment, however, he discovered that a third party was ahead of him. Within the shadow of the door that had sheltered Taylor was a man, evidently with his attention fixed upon Rutherford's home. He was so deep in the shadow that Burton barely distinguished him, his notice having been attracted by a slight noise caused by a change of posture. Though the discovery was unexpected, Burton kept up his slow, regular pace, apparently looking straight ahead and noting nothing to the right or left.

But for the faint noise referred to he would have known nothing of the eavesdropper's presence, which doubtless had a significance of its own.

"Well," muttered Burton after reaching a safe distance, "matters are becoming more mixed than ever. Who can that fellow be, and what is his business there?"

The lame man made as if to turn the other corner, doing;

Digitized by Google

so for a few paces and immediately coming far enough back to see down the street he had just left.

At that moment the bright light in Rutherford's room went out and all became darkness. The stillness of the deserted street enabled Burton to hear the rapid footsteps of the watcher across the way, which began simultaneously with the extinguishing of the light. For a few seconds Burton stood in doubt, supposing the stranger was coming towards him; but the figure, he could see by the lamplight, was walking quickly in the opposite direction.

"I must meet him somehow," was the watcher's decision, and immediately he set out after him at a sharper pace than he had shown that evening.

The instant the one ahead vanished round the first corner the pursuer quickened his pace until it closely approached a run. He was sure he would be close upon him when he, too, turned the corner.

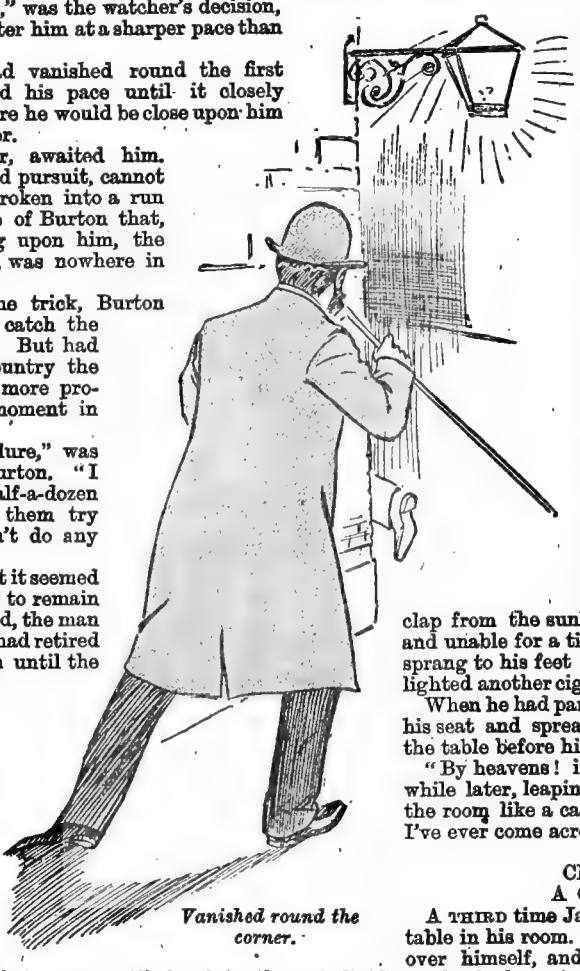
A disappointment, however, awaited him. Whether or not the man feared pursuit, cannot be told, but he must have broken into a run so much superior to the pace of Burton that, instead of the latter gaining upon him, the fugitive, as he may be called, was nowhere in sight.

Angry with himself at the trick, Burton listened intently hoping to catch the sound of the other's footsteps. But had he been miles out in the country the silence could not have been more profound than it was at that moment in that portion of Middlewick.

"To-night's work is a failure," was the disgusted conclusion of Burton. "I will send to London for half-a-dozen amateur detectives and let them try their hand. They surely can't do any worse than I have."

It was not yet midnight, but it seemed useless to the watcher for him to remain out of doors longer. Rutherford, the man whom he had set out to watch, had retired and would not be seen again until the morrow, when ten o'clock would once more see him at the bank.

The baffled watchman dropped back to his usual pace, and turned once more in the direction of Glenmora on his way to the hotel. Apparently Mr. Bryant's household had retired for the night, for the house was in darkness, though Jack Burton was right in believing that two persons, at least, beneath that roof would not close their eyes until far into the night, and even then sleep would be feverish, fitful, and tormented by the most frightful fears, misgivings and dreams that ever come to youth and age.



Vanished round the corner.

To avoid unpleasant complications, Burton slipped off his false beard and put it into his pocket before reaching the hotel. He managed also to recover from his lameness, and entered, looking very much, except as to attire, as he had looked upon his arrival in Middlewick.

It was still comparatively early for him, and after his rest during the afternoon, he felt no disposition to sleep. Nevertheless, he went to his room, paying little attention to the few loungers in the smoking-room, and without a glance at the visitors' book.

Had he scanned the written page of that book he would have learned something of importance.

Twenty-four hours and more had now gone by since Taylor's disappearance, and his friend had not picked up the faintest clue to his fate. He not only knew absolutely nothing, but was more perplexed than ever. He felt like roaming over the town the night through, and would have done so could he have felt the slightest assurance of accomplishing anything by such an action.

"Alf is dead," was his disheartened conclusion, "but how or where he met his fate may never be known."

Partly to distract his thoughts, he now turned his attention to the papers which Taylor had obtained when he made his call at Mr. Bryant's house. It will be remembered that they contained not only his handwriting but that of his book-keeper. With the paper also was the slip that had been pushed under the door of the bank on the night that Burton and Taylor were keeping watch together within.

Burton had given these a superficial examination when his friend first placed them before him, with the idea of instituting a comparison. As a relief from his worry about the detective, he now concentrated his whole attention on a minute and studied comparison of the penmanship.

It was inevitable that in the former instance he and Taylor, approaching the task with a preconceived theory, reached, as a result, the confirmation of that theory. The effect of this conclusion was still with Burton when he repeated the task. But suddenly a suppressed exclamation escaped him. A discovery came with a power that stunned him. At first it was a suspicion only, but it broke like a thunderclap from the sunlit sky, and held him breathless and unable for a time to go on with his task. He sprang to his feet and paced the room. Then he lighted another cigar and smoked earnestly.

When he had partly composed himself he resumed his seat and spread out the papers once more on the table before him, underneath the gaslight.

"By heavens! it's true!" he exclaimed, a short while later, leaping again to his feet and pacing the room like a caged lion. "This beats anything I've ever come across!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A Game of Bluff.

A third time Jack Burton sat down to the little table in his room. He had now gained the mastery over himself, and was the same cool, collected individual who had so rigorously followed the fleeing Sam Birch. He sat with his shoulder to the light, and, leaning back in his chair, scrutinised the papers for fully ten minutes, his whole mental strength concentrated upon and absorbed in the effort. When he had finished he carefully folded and placed them in an inner pocket, where he meant to guard them carefully.

"*The secret is solved,*" was his conclusion, as he settled himself more comfortably in his chair. "Strange that the truth never suggested itself to Alf or me before; I see it all now."

Looking back over the events of the past few days, Burton saw their perfect conformity to the astonishing discovery he had just made. None of the slight difficulties which confronted himself before now showed themselves; everything was smooth, clear, and complete. It was a grand triumph, but his heart sank as he realised that all this had not the remotest bearing upon the fate of his missing friend. That awful problem remained unsolved.

The difficulties in his path, as far as that business was concerned, were as great as ever.

"Sh!"

Surely there was a noise in the room adjoining, the one which had been occupied by Alfred Taylor two nights before. Burton's heart gave a quick throb of hope at the thought that his friend had returned. He was on the point of jumping to his feet and dashing into his apartment to welcome him, but his habit of caution restrained him. Better to wait until all doubt on the question was removed.

Everything was quiet for a few minutes. Burton softly rose and again pressed his ear against the wall. Yes; someone was in the other room, moving softly about—proof that it was not the rightful occupant, for there could be no call for such precaution on his part.

A sudden thought flashed across Burton's mind.

"It's Roberts! It was he who was watching Frank Rutherford's place; he has come back to the hotel and has sneaked into Alf's room. It strikes me that it is about time I took part in this business."

Noiselessly he opened his own door and stepped into the corridor. From the light shining through the space between the door and the floor he concluded that the intruder was availing himself of the benefit of gaslight.

Gently seizing the door-knob Burton tried it. As he suspected, it was not locked. Then he opened the door so quickly that it gave not the slightest sound.

Standing with his back towards the entrance was a man, carefully examining some papers that he had taken from the portmanteau on the floor, and which had been opened by means of one of his false keys.

"Ahem!"

Burton cleared his throat as an announcement that he had arrived. The intruder started with the nervous movement natural to a person when detected doing something wrong. He wheeled about and confronted the visitor, who instantly demonstrated that he was master of the situation. Extended at arm's length Burton held his revolver at a dead level with the muzzle aimed straight at the other's face.

He sprang to his feet.

"The first movement, and I fire!"

The words were spoken in a perfectly distinct, though low tone, while it was easy to judge from the gleam in Burton's eye that the threat was by no means an idle one.

Standing thus, Burton reached behind him with his left hand and closed the door. The two were now alone in the room.

"Bobby Roberts, alias John O'Kane, you are my prisoner," said Jack Burton.

It was impossible for anyone to be caught more fairly than was the individual thus addressed. Anticipating nothing of the kind, the revolver which he always carried still reposed in Roberts' pocket. In his confusion he dropped the paper in his hand, and demanded sullenly:

"What d'you want?"

"Sit down."

"Why?"

"Sit down, I tell you."

He was near the window, and close enough to a chair to obey without shifting his position. He did as commanded, dropping into a seat almost in a state of collapse. Sitting thus, he still confronted the levelled weapon, which followed his movements so that the muzzle held relatively the same position as before.

"Now, Roberts, let's understand each other," continued Burton, in the same off-hand manner he had shown from the first. "You can see that I have the advantage of you. Do as you're told, and you'll be all right; try to escape, and I pull the trigger. You know what *that* means."

The villain was rapidly regaining his self-possession.

"That's all right enough, but what's the use of keeping that thing pointed like that? It might go off accidentally."

"I'm too used to it to have any accidents."

"But it isn't necessary. It makes me nervous."

"All right, we'll have a change then," said Burton, taking a step forward and sitting down, but doing so without removing his gaze from the face of the other.

At the same moment he lowered his hand so that it rested on his knee. The position was less constrained and could be kept up for a long time without tiring his arm. Nevertheless, the weapon was so placed that any movement on the part of the prisoner could be instantly anticipated.

"Do you know me, Roberts?" asked Burton, with a smile.

The other, who had been studying his face intently, flushed and uttered a savage imprecation.

"Ah, I see you do. So much the better. Now we understand each other."

"I don't see what you can do with a man who gets into a wrong room by mistake," remarked Roberts, with a weak attempt at facetiousness.

"Not much, it's true, and if that was all I wouldn't bother you; but you haven't forgotten those other little accounts I have to settle with you, eh, Volney."

"What are they to do with you? What proof have you that I had anything to do with them?"

"Enough to arrest you at once on the warrants I have in my pocket."

Evidently Roberts considered the game up at last, and knowing well the man with whom he had to deal, he simply said sullenly:

"Well, Cairns, you've got the best of me this time. What are you going to do?"

"That depends upon *you*."

This was an altogether surprising reply. Roberts accepted it as signifying that the other, like too many people, were capable of being bought. The chance was eagerly seized.

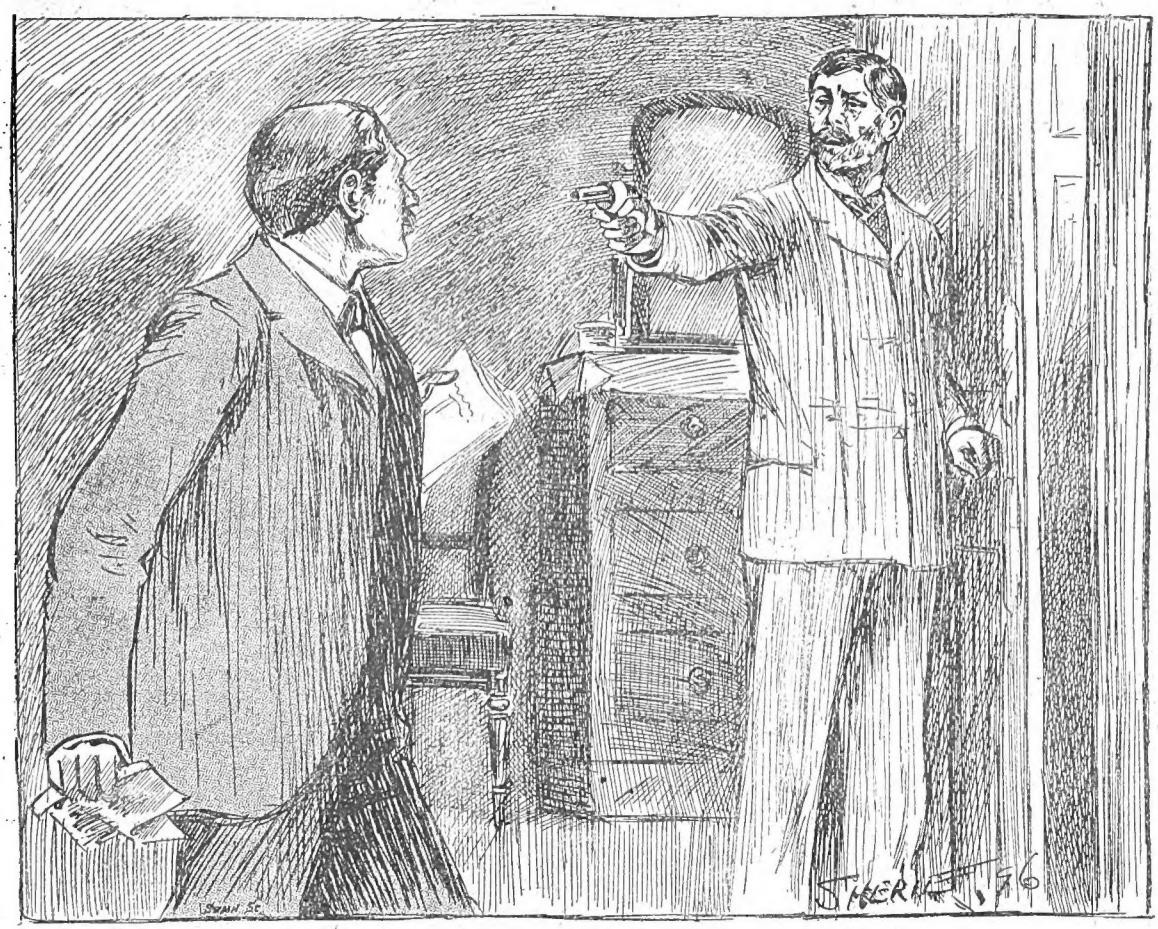
"Now you're talking sense. You'll find I'll act all square, old fellow. How much do you want?"

"What can you pay?"

"How does £300 strike you?"

"Come, you can afford more than that."

Digitized by Google



"The first movement, and I fire!"

"Don't be too rough on a poor orphan," said Roberts, who, seeing a prospect of release from an awkward dilemma, was disposed to be jocular; "you know I'm poor but honest."

"You wouldn't miss £500."

Roberts whistled softly, and opened his eyes.

"That's easily earned; but all right, it's a bargain, if you say so."

"I haven't said so," remarked Burton.

The couple had never once removed their eyes from each other's faces while talking. The remark of Burton awakened a sudden distrust on the part of his captive.

"It isn't fair to treat a fellow like that, Cairns; I would be square with you if our positions were different."

"Roberts," said the other, in the same low, business-like voice, which could hardly have been heard in the next room, "I wouldn't let you off for five, nor for ten, nor for one hundred thousand pounds. I have had plenty of such chances before to-night and haven't taken any of them yet."

"What did you mean, then, by saying what you did?" demanded the scowling ruffian, who would have given the sum named for the chance of twisting Burton's neck.

"I mean what I said. I won't compound a felony in the way you have in mind, but I will, for the first time in my life, do it, provided you pay me in another way."

"I don't understand you."

"Produce Alf Taylor alive and well, and you shall be free from any molestation from me for any and everything done previous to this night. We'll wipe it off the slate and begin anew to-morrow."

Eagerly Burton studied the miscreant's face while making him the offer. That it would be accepted he felt certain; but it was by no means certain that Roberts would be able to carry out his part of the agreement. He could lose nothing, and would have a chance of gaining everything, by making the required pledge.

The all-important question remained as to Roberts' ability to do anything of the nature required. It was not impossible that he knew nothing of the missing officer. Burton, however, believed that he did. At any rate, he was ready to act upon that supposition.

An indescribable expression passed over the villain's face.

"What makes you fancy I know anything of your friend Taylor?"

"I have only a suspicion; if you don't, why, the matter is ended, and I'll march you down to the lock-up to keep your three friends company."

"I haven't said I won't do as you ask, Cairns," was the significant remark of the prisoner.

"Understand, my proposition is that you produce Taylor well and unharmed—nothing less than *that* will answer."

Digitized by Google

"I'll agree he shall be alive, but suppose you leave out the condition of being 'unharmed.'"

The significance of this remark sent a chill through Burton, for it clearly implied that the detective had suffered some injury. Indeed, Burton felt that he ought to have known that for the brave fellow would have been heard from before had he not been disabled through some attack.

"Well, say the injury is not fatal; that will answer."

"I can agree to that proposition, but you wouldn't expect me to bring him here?"

"No, you are to take me to him."

"If I do that, you swear that you'll let me start afresh from to-night."

"I give you my word, which I have never broken."

"Ahem! I don't think either of us have much to boast of in that line."

"So far as you are concerned you are correct. Will you take me to him to-night?"

"Yes; but, look here, I don't intend to walk downstairs at the point of that thing," pointing to the revolver.

"You needn't; I'll put it in my coat pocket, with my finger nice and handy on the trigger, so that if you try any tricks I can fire through the coat with certain aim."

"And what about the one I've got."

"You're welcome to it. Being my guest you will walk ahead. If you can use it any quicker than me you are welcome to do so. Now that's settled. By-the-way, there are just a few things I'd like to know."

"I'm listening."

"You were in this affair with Birch and the others?"

Roberts nodded his head silently.

"Well, so was I, and what I can't make out is where the dickins you got to. I knew you were in Middlewick, for I saw you in the street, but Nash and King were the only ones inside the bank, and Birch was the only other one of your friends near the bank. I ask again, what did you do in the affair?"

A sinister smile crossed Roberts' face as he replied meaningly:

"The bargain that you and I have just made is sufficient answer to that question."

"I guessed as much," said Burton, trying to conceal the shudder that passed over him.

An indescribable expression passed over the villain's face.

"You expected me to turn up, and I didn't; you expected Taylor to help you, and he didn't. Put two and two together, and there you have the four as plainly as anything."

Burton nodded his head. Nothing could be plainer than that.

"Rather lucky for me, too," added Roberts, "for they can't bring anything against me, so far at least as Middlewick's concerned."

"That's true enough, but you forget the documents in my possession render that unnecessary; I rely upon them."

"Ah, but you promised not to use them after to-night."

"*I* won't use them provided you perform your part of the contract. How long will it take us to get there to-night?"

Roberts hesitated a moment.

"I am not sure as to that, it depends."

"Half-an-hour; an hour; two hours?"

The prisoner grinned knowingly. He did not mean to give away the slight advantage he now possessed.

"Well, half-an-hour, perhaps. But you understand, I am trusting to your honour to leave me alone from the minute I've taken you to Taylor."

"Yes. If I find him alive and not mortally injured."

"All right. I'll take you to him——"

"*You needn't trouble yourself. Here I am.*"

It was the detective himself who uttered the last word as he strode into the room where the two men sat.

(To be continued.)

£100 GOING BEGGING.

At the left-hand bottom corner of the second page of cover of *Short Stories* will be found a coupon. This coupon will appear every week during the whole of 1896. It will also appear every week in *Pearson's Weekly* during the same period.

Procure as many of these coupons as you possibly can and keep them; because we are going to give the person who collects the most coupons during the year 1896 the sum of

One Hundred Pounds.

No coupons are to be sent to us until January 1st, 1897. Keep them safely till then. All coupons are of equal value.

Owing to the large number of attempts sent in for the Second Series of the "Brain Gymnasium," it has been found impossible to finish checking the solutions before this number of "Short Stories" goes to press. The names of the winners will, therefore, appear in next week's issue.

HAVE YOU HEARD PIERNÉ'S

"MARCH OF THE LITTLE TIN SOLDIERS"

IN

"MELODY"

For April? It is distinctly good.

POSTAL RATES.

Short Stories will be sent direct from these offices, post free, to any country within the Postal Union, at the following rates, prepaid:

One Year	6s. 6d.
Half Year	3s. 3d.
Three Months	1s. 8d.

Printed and Published by C. Arthur Pearson, at "Pearson's Weekly" Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation,
Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,
Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

ANNUAL SALE SIX MILLION BOXES.

In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

MASON'S

EXTRACT OF HERBS

For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

Mason's EXTRACT of HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE

FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

Newball & Mason,

HYSON GREEN WORKS,

Nottingham.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

HAVE YOU A POST-CARD?

If not, please obtain one, and send it to

THE PEARSON POTTERY CO., HANLEY,

with your name and address on the back, and you will receive by next-post full particulars of the most wonderful package of crockery the world has ever seen.

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

A Dinner Service of 50 pieces is included, which is guaranteed to be worth the guinea alone, and a China Tea Service of 28 pieces, finished in gold, together with a lot of useful kitchen crockery.

The Secret of the Success.—The Pearson Pottery Company are manufacturers, not middlemen, like many other advertisers. The Pearson Potteries have nearly 2,000ft. frontage to the town of Hanley.

Thousands sold all over the world. Everybody not only satisfied but amazed at the quantity and quality given.

Hundreds of these packages are applied for as **Wedding or Birthday Presents,** And what more useful present can be given? Every item is useful.

Post-cards and Letters to be addressed to the

PEARSON POTTERY COMPANY, HANLEY.

Digitized by Google

GIVEN AWAY £5,000!

GRAHAM & CO.'S

MONSTER GIFTS.

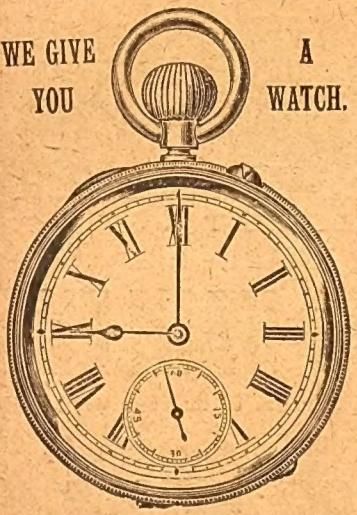
IMPORTANT NOTICE.—Messrs. GRAHAM & CO. intend to present their Customers with a Monster Parcel as a means of advertising their celebrated

EGYPTIAN GOLD JEWELLERY.

For the small sum of **6s. 6d.** we will send as follows:—

NOT A TOY

WE GIVE YOU A WATCH.



	Our Price.	
One Gent's Egyptian Gold Albert, or one Lady's Egyptian Gold Albert	2s. 6d.	FOR 6s. 6d.
One Seal or Locket for Chain	1s. 6d.	
One Gent's Carbon Diamond Ring, or one Lady's 5-stone Diamond Ring	3s. 6d.	
One Gent's Carbon Diamond Scarfpin, or one Lady's Fashionable Brooch	2s. 6d.	
One Pair of Cuff Links, or one Carbon Diamond Bracelet ...	2s. 6d.	
Total	12s. 6d.	

In addition to the above Every Purchaser will be Presented Free of Charge with one of our handsome

KEYLESS WATCHES.

USUALLY SOLD AT HALF-A-GUINEA.

Read what is said by those who have purchased.

WANTS A SECOND PARCEL.

Lowick-by-Neale, Northumberland, August 17.

GENTLEMEN,—Received to-day your second parcel of jewellery, with which we are immensely pleased. We really wonder how you can do it. The watch itself is worth more than the money charged for the whole. Many thanks for punctuality.—Very truly yours, WILLIAM McISAAC.

GOES BETTER THAN HIS £15 WATCH.

11, North Street, St. Peters, Tunbridge Wells.

GENTLEMEN,—Some few weeks ago I sent to your firm for the jewellery and advertised watch, of which I am surprised; the *watch* is a beautiful timist. I must admit, in fact, it goes better than my £15 gold watch; and for the jewellery it is astonishing value. I think you must lose money over such gifts, as I term it. The watch alone is worth double the 7s. I enclosed. I have shown it to several of my friends, and they were astonished. You can add this to your testimonials if it will be of any service.—I am, Gentlemen, yours faithfully, LEWIS C. RHODES.

GUARANTEED TO KEEP CORRECT TIME.

Any Watch not received in going order will be exchanged.

Every Watch is Carefully Examined, Timed, and Guaranteed a Correct Timekeeper. Call and see them.

We do this to save the enormous cost of advertising, preferring to give our customers the benefit. As we lose money on each parcel we cannot supply more than two parcels to one person. If you cannot call get a P.O. at once, and send for this wonderful parcel. Orders will be executed in Rotation. **MONEY RETURNED IF NOT AS REPRESENTED.**

NOTE.—The entire parcel will be sent for 6s. 6d. (post free, registered, 7s.). Each customer wil receive gratis one of our HANDSOMELY ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUES. Be sure and call or send to-day for the

6s. 6d. Monster Presentation Parcel including the Handsome Keyless Watch.

S. S. GRAHAM & CO., 277, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.